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Norman Mailer as Rewrite Man

BY A. KENT MACDOUGALL

It was too bad to be true. Everyone had known for years that Norman Mailer was a mixed-up megalomaniac, a sexist, a tough, a sometime public drunk. But Norman Mailer a plagiarist? Norman Mailer sneaking through the stacks, extracting dusty volumes, copying out long-forgotten passages and then trying to pass them off as his own? They must have the wrong man. Yet there it was, in *The New York Times*. First a report from London that "the British publishers of Norman Mailer's biography of Marilyn Monroe had agreed to halt publication following an allegation that large sections were plagiarized from two earlier biographies of the actress." Then five days later (a lapse to give one pause) a ferocious counterpunch from the Brooklyn Bomber himself: "No one is going to call me a plagiarist and get away with it; I do not need other writers' words or thoughts to make myself a book." Next to the denial a second story from London, in which the British publisher of the two previous biographies repeated his accusation that "Norman Mailer was a plagiarist and knew he was one."

Out in Hollywood, one of the offended biographers, Maurice Zolotow, was even more emphatic. "It's one of the literary heists of the century," he told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "The only thing a writer owns is his words, and Mailer should know that. It's like Dillinger going to a bank in broad daylight and taking money and coolly walking out." But how could Zolotow talk like that only a week or two after he chatted amiably with Mailer at a pre-publication party that Grosset & Dunlap gave for Mailer at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Los Angeles? Several days after the cocktail party Zolotow wrote his New York agent Scott Meredith that he and Mailer had

**Is his new book on
Marilyn Monroe a
"literary heist," as
one biographer
claims? Herewith a
comparison of Marilyn
and the two previous
biographies that
fueled it.**

gotten along famously, that he even felt "flattered by being attacked by Mailer" in the book and was dying to see it.

To hear Zolotow tell it later, on his way to see his lawyer about suing Mailer, reading the book was a disillusioning experience. "I am shocked and hurt. I admired and trusted this man, and now I feel betrayed—and insulted in the bargain. I gave him permission to quote. But permission to quote is not permission to steal."

That Mailer obtained permission to quote is not contested. The copyright page of his *Marilyn* asserts that excerpts from Maurice Zolotow's *Marilyn Monroe* and Fred Lawrence Guiles' *Norma Jean: The Life of Marilyn Monroe* are "reprinted by permission" of the authors and their publishers. And in the back of the book, Mailer says, "So, once again, it is right to make acknowledgment to Maurice Zolotow for the bright pictures he paints in *Marilyn Monroe* (Harcourt Brace, 1960) when he is at his best, and to Fred Lawrence Guiles for the thousands of details his work, *Norma Jean* (McGraw-Hill, 1969) provides."

Indeed, it was after reading Guiles' *Norma Jean* that Mailer decided to turn what was to have

been a 25,000-word "interpretive essay" into a psycho-biography. Within three months of taking on the assignment from Grosset & Dunlap, Mailer delivered a 105,000-word manuscript, subsequently cut to 93,000 words and rushed into print (with 103 photographs) for August 1 publication.

In his hurry, Mailer had almost no time for original research and had to lean heavily on previous biographies. Did he exceed the permissions? Did he use more material than he was authorized to? Also, did he borrow thoughts and concepts as well as words? Absolutely, asserts the wrathful Zolotow. Absurd, answers Robert Markel, editor-in-chief of adult trade books at Grosset & Dunlap. There seemed only one way to reconcile the claims. Read all three books and compare them line for line, fact for "factoid" (to repeat a Mailerism).

The first thing that strikes one sitting down to read the three books is the bulk of Mailer's. At three pounds, four ounces, *Marilyn* outweighs Zolotow's and Guiles' books together by one ounce. Without a doubt *Marilyn* is quintessential Mailer. Whether or not he has stolen facts and factoids, Mailer writes in the idiosyncratic style that would make even his laundry list distinctive. Who but he refers to himself in the third person, as "he" and "the writer"? It is a conceit unpleasantly reminiscent of the way Catholics refer to "Mon-signor" without using the cleric's name, or White House aides talk of "the President" instead of Richard Nixon. The effect is to render a fallible human as awesome and unassailable as his office. Mailer's office, at least to some literati and literati aspirants, is Dean of American Letters. Whether he deserves the title, he plays the role. Factoid is not his only coinage. There's "squiblet" (for Marilyn's bit parts in early films), "whoors" (for the way New Yorkers pronounce whores) and, best of all, "fucky" (to describe how Marilyn looks when

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William Woodward, [MORE]'s publisher, is on a leave of absence this month to work on the business side of the *New York Post*.

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People never seem to be neutral about Barbara Walters the way they are about, say, Frank McGee or John Chancellor. In fact, almost everyone I know is violently hostile to television's so-called "queen of the morning." No doubt CBS' Sally Quinn, whose pre-debut publicity has probably set some kind of record, will either be lavishly admired or roundly disparaged when she kicks off her manufactured "catfight" with Walters this month. One reason, of course, why no one takes women on television calmly is that there are so few of them—and if you think the number of women on the air is rising rapidly, trying counting up the number of female reporters you've seen lately. (CBS News, as noted in *The Big Apple* this month, has seven on-air women worldwide.)

Because of the widespread impact of the women's movement in more enlightened circles, prospects do seem brighter now for women working in the media than they did a few years ago. Yet while *Newsweek* women celebrate far-reaching gains, spelled out in a recent "memorandum of understanding" with management, many are also mindful that it took three years of haggling—and two federal complaints—to get their superiors to comply with the civil rights law—and this in one of

COLUMN TWO

BY TERRY PRISTIN

the rare companies owned by a woman—Katharine Graham. Now *Newsweek* (which had begun to make substantial progress even before the agreement was signed) is in the vanguard, with other news organizations lagging behind. But elsewhere, too, women are no longer waiting for management to announce occasional promotions coupled with pious policy statements. Instead, they are organizing, meeting with their bosses and dangling (in some instances, fulfilling) threats of federal action.

Yes, it is even happening in those huge midtown fortresses that house the television networks, environments where the scarifying corporate presence is more keenly felt than at most newspapers. At the three "webs," as *Variety* calls them, large numbers of women, though by no means all, are no longer behaving like trapped flies. Actively participating in the broadcasting movement are women as diverse as Mary McNulty, an NBC secretary for 28 years, and Marlene Sanders, a former ABC reporter turned producer, as well as countless data processors, researchers, film librarians, typists and middle-level executives. While they are learning about each other, amassing statistics, drafting proposals and sharing their knowledge with colleagues at regularly scheduled tri-network meetings, they are also becoming more sophisticated about the workings of their respective corporations, finding out about complex pay-scale computations, pensions and life insurance programs.

These are not, for the most part, activist women, those "libbers" you used to see mocked on the evening news. They are, plain and simply, women who are weary of being passed over for promotions, stuck in dead-end jobs or saddled with bottom-of-the show froth instead of serious news. They want to change the way women are portrayed in the media, and they want more newswomen visible on television—not just those you love to hate.

[HELLBOX]

Rosebuds to reporter John Blackburn and his paper, the *Santa Ana* (California) *Register*, for uncovering the sleight-of-hand financing of President Nixon's San Clemente property. As early as last October, Blackburn had reported that the land deal for the ocean-front villa had included a secret parcel of 2.95 acres in addition to the announced total of 21.65 acres. Working with county records, he learned that \$100,000—\$20,000 down plus an \$80,000 mortgage—had been paid for the undisclosed acreage, but ownership of both parcels remained concealed behind a blind trust account with a title insurance company.

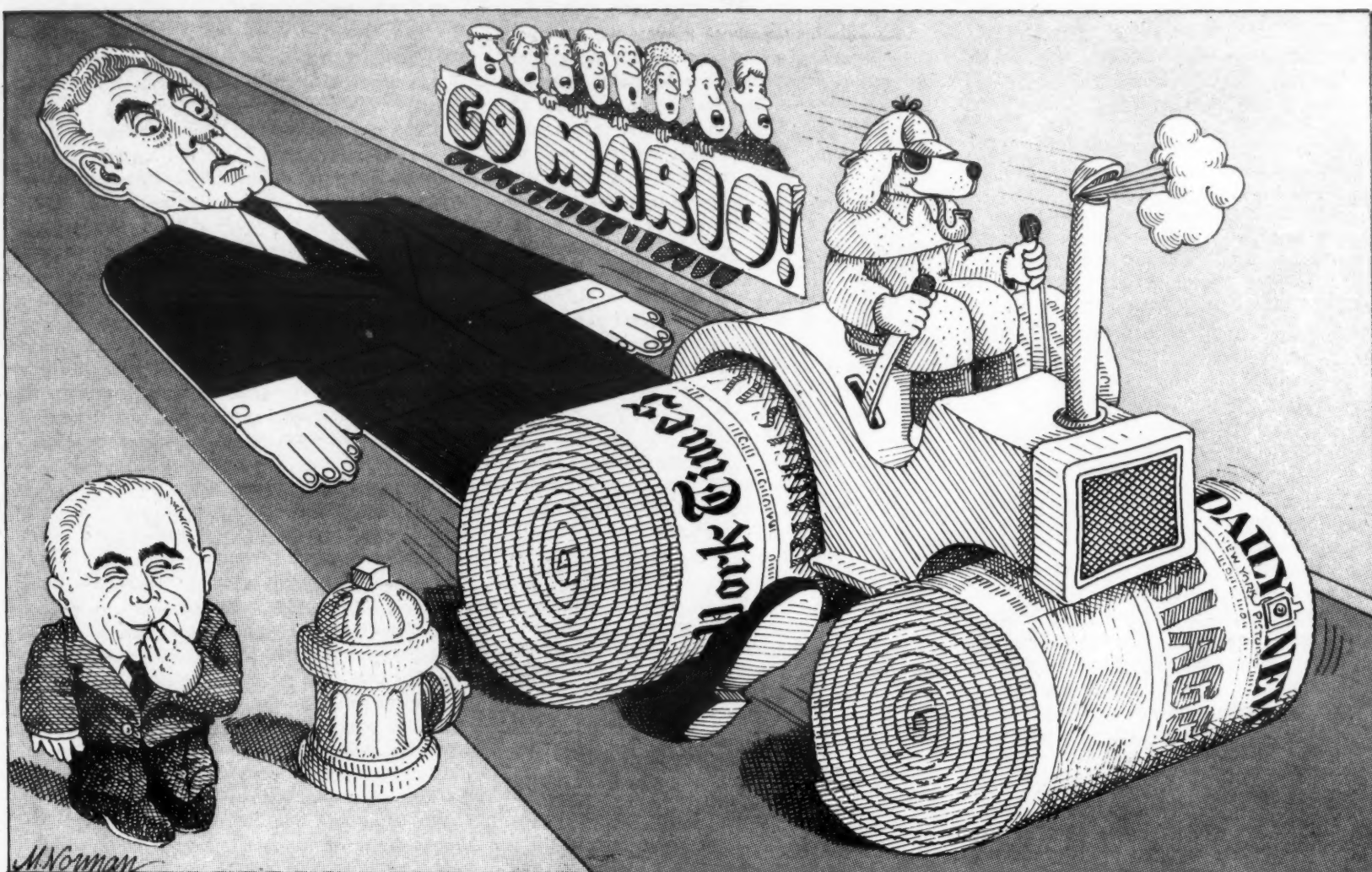
Blackburn's first big break came in February from two federal investigators working one corner of the Watergate labyrinth. These sources, whose identity was never disclosed, told Blackburn about a bank account in the name of Herbert Kalmbach, which they believed might have been used by the President's former personal lawyer as a holding place for political espionage funds and hush money. That story ran Feb. 9. Two months later two other federal agents approached Blackburn and told him that a government agency was exploring the possibility that the entire San Clemente package had been bought with unreported 1968 Nixon campaign funds.

The *Register*, a fundamentally conservative paper in rigidly conservative Orange County, ran Blackburn's story of the campaign fund investigation May 13. There was a strong White House denial two days later, but by May 26 media pressure had built up enough to force public disclosure that Richard Nixon had, in fact been a mortgagor. In total, the property had cost \$1.5 million. Nixon had put down \$420,000 and held a mortgage of \$1,080,000. In order to do this, he had borrowed from aerosol valve magnate Robert Abplanalp \$625,000, which was used for the down payment and the first mortgage payment. But in December, 1970, it was said, Abplanalp bought from Nixon 18.7 acres, leaving the President his Spanish style villa and 5.9 acres. The price: \$1,249,000—land values having apparently risen because there was a better class of people living in the neighborhood. Abplanalp, it was also announced, had assumed a \$560,000 mortgage in addition to ripping up the original \$625,000 note. The remaining \$64,000 of the \$1,249,000 purchase price was not accounted for. In any event, the President had done well, or so it would appear. It seems that he now owes only \$251,000 on the 5.9 acres, some of which may have already been paid off. The whole explanation, however, was offered on a you've-got-to-take-our-word-for-it basis, the actual records of the transactions remaining hidden behind the blind trust.

The icing on Blackburn's reportorial cake was his subsequent digging into federal funds spent on the San Clemente property. In response to a written question from *The New York Times*, the White House on May 26 had also made public a list of federal expenditures on the property totaling \$39,525, a figure that was widely disbelieved.

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In coming issues, we hope to expand the Hellbox. We urge our readers to help by letting us know about the performance—good and bad—of the media in their area. Write to [MORE]—P.O. Box 2971—Grand Central Station—New York, N.Y. 10017.



How the Press Stopped Biaggi

BY DAVID M. ALPERN

During the week last March when John V. Lindsay faced reality and formally removed himself from the 1973 mayoralty I found myself on a radio talk show with John Hamilton, a member of the editorial board of *The New York Times* and the man who molds much of the *Times*' opinion on local issues. We were discussing the other mayoral contenders and when Mario Biaggi's name came up, Hamilton's hackles rose visibly, perhaps even audibly. He zeroed in on all those nasty rumors that had trailed Biaggi for years and most of the other reporters on the program agreed that they might well present a problem for Biaggi. But the very fact that so few of those dark tales ever had been pinned down also suggested that there might be more smoke than fire. Just wait, Hamilton seemed to bristle. You'll see.

Well, we saw. For more than a month this spring, while Watergate dominated the national scene, the big New York story was Mario Biaggi: his appearance before a Federal grand jury back in 1971, his invocation of the Fifth Amendment on various questions of finances and personal and political associations and his repeated lying about that appearance. The ensuing wrangle over what Biaggi said pushed most other campaign issues into the background and the final disclosure of his grand jury testimony probably fatally undercut an otherwise solid shot at City Hall by the conservative cop-turned-congressman.

Was it a triumph for *The New York Times* and *New York Daily News* which broke the story on April 18? Of course. But their first front page pieces also prompted a small squall of debate and self-

The cop-turned-congressman is still a candidate for Mayor of New York. That the once prime contender now has little hope of winning is largely due to the efforts of the *Times* and the *Daily News*.

criticism within the journalistic community. Even some dedicated Biaggiphobes began to feel that the congressman's rights were being infringed. The unfettered operation of the press—with a somewhat surprising assist from the courts and the U.S. Attorney—also shook up some of the traditional concepts of secrecy and sanctity generally associated with the grand jury system. "I don't think it was one of the proudest moments in American journalism," says WNEW-TV's Gabe Pressman, a veteran New York newsman who followed the Biaggi affair closely. "It was our obligation to run the story," argues *Times* managing editor A.M. Rosenthal. "How could we possibly justify not running it?"

How the *Times* and *News* went after the Biaggi story, how they penetrated the veil of grand jury secrecy and how they viewed the legal and

ethical problems involved in the process is a revealing story in itself. For one thing, each newspaper took a significantly different approach. While the *News* tried to force the truth out through official channels—by having the candidate, the Conservative party (whose nomination Biaggi had locked up) or government officials make the testimony public—the *Times* launched a good, old-fashioned effort of its own to get the story on page one. As it happened, the *Times* scored a scoop of several hours, although with at least one glaring error on the number of questions that Biaggi had refused to answer. The fascinating question is whether the difference in approach was merely a matter of journalistic preference, or a reflection of basic differences in political orientation—the *Times* being hostile to Biaggi while the *News* was somewhat predisposed to the law-and-order Democrat, at least at the outset.

Sensitive investigative stories always demand a certain delicacy in handling. "I was not asked about my sources," says *Times* reporter Nick Gage. "All Gelb [*Times* metropolitan editor Arthur Gelb] asked me was, 'Are you sure?' He was taking a big chance. One mistake on a story like this and you're through in this business." Gage, 33, born in Greece and raised in New England, had been an investigative reporter at Cowles (*The Insiders Newsletter*), AP, the *Boston Herald Traveler* and *The Wall Street Journal*. At the *Times*, he had broken big stories about organized crime, government investigations and, most recently, had exposed the curious case of the Metropolitan Museum's Euphronios krater. Because of a pending investigation into grand jury leaks in the Biaggi case, Gage was extremely reluctant to discuss his own investigation in any substantial

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detail. But he did suggest that the techniques he developed produced the necessary corroboration without breaking any law. And Gage says that he "never worked on a story as hard to get—where people talked less" than the one on Biaggi.

Gage is a man of striking inventiveness andchutzpah; he boasts about bluffing most of the krater story out of art dealer Robert Hecht at their very first meeting. For the Biaggi story he composed lists of potential sources that included members of the grand jury, the assistant U.S. attorneys involved—even relatives of these and others who might know the story. Gage hunted through public records, hoping to come across misfiled papers that might give him a clue (a happy accident that helped him once on a story for *The Wall Street Journal*), and he made several attempts to overhear the assistant U.S. attorneys during lunch at a local restaurant (it didn't work). He later drew a rebuke from the U.S. Attorney's office for asking one of the assistants to pump another for information—and for putting out the word that he would appreciate receiving a copy of the grand jury transcript sent anonymously. A report filed by former U.S. Attorney Whitney North Seymour—after Biaggi's testimony was made public—called the *Times* reporter's methods "improper and potentially illegal." Says Gage: "They are standard procedures in my reporting practice... When you're struggling, you try anything."

There were other leads. Denny Walsh, the former Life staffer who now does investigative reporting for the *Times* out of Washington, provided some contacts in the U.S. Immigration Service, but their confidence proved non-transferrable. Gage did get some information from other investigations of Biaggi—including the report prepared for former Rep. James Scheuer, who once thought of challenging Biaggi—but they were filled mostly with rumor or second-hand versions of events inside the grand jury room. Gage also found himself falling heir to a string of tips from Biaggi's political enemies, most of which proved useless or at least unverifiable.

Where did Gage finally pin down his story? It is probably not the place of a journalism review to reveal a reporter's sources—the confidentiality of which it would surely defend if the reporter himself were brought before a grand jury. But it is known that knowledge of what went on inside the grand jury room passed through the U.S. Attorney's office to other branches of the Justice Department, the Internal Revenue Service and perhaps even the White House. (John Caulfield and Anthony Ulasewicz, the former New York cops who played Holmes and Watson for John Ehrlichman, were known to have delved into Biaggi's history—and possibly into Federal files on him as well.) With so many people involved, the likelihood of leakage is enormous, despite the denials sworn to by two score government employees in the official investigation later conducted by Seymour's office.

That investigation (self-touted as highly "imaginative") did come up with two government employees who allegedly passed Gage information that they said they had obtained from "non-governmental" sources. And one word around the *Times* is that Gage focused a good deal of his own effort on sources in the private sector. Friends and associates of Biaggi, including principal adviser Laurence Marchini, were said to have known and talked about his testimony with various people from time to time. There are no constraints on information that comes from a grand jury witness himself—or from those he has made privy to his testimony.

The *Times* interest in Biaggi has fluctuated

over the years. *Times*man Charles Grutzner, now retired, looked into some rumors about the Bronx congressman back in 1969 and 1970 but could not come up with sufficient corroboration. Then, last October, reporter Martin Tolchin surfaced the story that Biaggi was one of several congressmen called before a New York Federal grand jury looking into the welter of private immigration bills introduced every year in behalf of aliens trying to remain in the U.S. Shortly after that story ran, the *Times* says, Tolchin received an anonymous tip that Biaggi had taken the Fifth Amendment during his grand jury appearance. Questioned about this by Tolchin, the congressman said he had answered all questions on immigration; he refused to go beyond that in the interview. The matter was apparently dropped. When Biaggi began to gain prominence in the pack of City Hall hopefuls, he was asked about his grand jury appearance again by *Times* reporter Tom Buckley, who was preparing profiles of the likely contenders. Buckley reported Biaggi's claim that he "replied fully to all questions put to him."

In January of this year, Arthur Gelb put Gage on the Biaggi case, although it still apparently rated less than top priority on West 43rd Street. Gelb shipped Gage off to Europe right in the middle of his investigation in order to get the story behind the acquisition of the controversial krater. By the time Gage returned to the newsroom, the *News* was on to the Biaggi story, too. "I was hoping for a few days rest," Gage recalls, "but Gelb came by and asked, 'What about Biaggi?'"

In the end, Gage learned that Biaggi had actually made two grand jury appearances and that it was at the second—not focused exclusively on immigration matters—that he took the Fifth. Armed with this knowledge, he confronted the congressman, but instead of bringing up the second appearance straight away, Gage asked first about a number of charges that he knew Biaggi could easily deny. As the congressman began feeling more confident, Gage inquired whether he had been asked about a certain matter at this second grand jury appearance—Gage knew he hadn't—and Biaggi breezily denied it. After several more irrelevant questions, Gage asked again about the second appearance. Yes, there was one, Biaggi replied, but the particular matter Gage had asked about earlier had positively never come up. And that confirmed the second appearance.

By Monday, April 16, Gage had confirmed the whole story to his satisfaction, asked Biaggi specifically if he ever took the Fifth (the congressman denied it) and finally turned in his copy. The editors took a day to go over the piece and ordered it set in print on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 17. It was pure coincidence, the *Times* insists, that this was the same day the *Daily News* had invited Biaggi back to its offices for a confrontation before running its own Fifth Amendment story. In any case, the first edition of the *Times* was exclusive with the story that night. "We didn't even know he was over at the *News* that day," says Arthur Gelb. "We were kind of gloating over the story. They didn't match it until their final edition."

There were few second thoughts at the *Times* about the nature of the story or the way Gage had broken it. "I don't see any objections to a reporter calling up any potential source," said Rosenthal after the Seymour report was issued. "How do you get a story anyway? Obviously, we don't ask a reporter who his sources are or how he's going about getting his story. But I consider that the *Times* is responsible for the methods our reporters use and there our standards are quite clear: we don't pay for stories, we don't masquerade and we don't tap."

"The important thing to understand about the Biaggi story," says Rosenthal, "is that this was not a question about whether a person has the right to take the Fifth Amendment but whether a public official has the right to lie—and to lie in a context that was essential to the electoral process." (The Conservative party had specifically asked Biaggi about his grand jury testimony.) "We went through weeks of discussion here," Rosenthal told me, pacing across his office den. "And the point is that once you have the information, what is a newspaper to do? There are only two options really—to print or not to print. In almost every instance of major controversy you will find people—both well-motivated and self-seeking—who say you should not print. But generally speaking I believe that the long run benefits to society come with printing. Should we have spiked the Pentagon Papers? You're not Solomon or a judge... You're a newspaper."

To print or not to print." Those were the options as seen at the *Times*. But across town on East 42nd Street, the *Daily News* had carved out a third route. While its team of investigative reporters worked to pin down the story, the paper tried using what information it had to prompt others to spotlight Biaggi's public perjury by obtaining release of his grand jury testimony through official channels. Had the ploy worked as planned, there would have been no need for a *News* story quoting only unnamed sources on what was supposedly secret testimony. Perhaps there would have been no need for a story at all if Biaggi was actually telling the truth.

Was this gingerly handling dictated by the fact that Biaggi was the natural *News* candidate? Sources at the paper are quick to point out that no endorsement was planned for this year's Democratic primary and there were no official editorial discussions about endorsement. Managing editor Mike O'Neill, a rumpled-looking UPI alumnus with a slow, sure manner, warns against jumping to the conclusion that Biaggi would have been the *News* candidate, although there was certainly no philosophical antagonism towards him. Another politically sensitive source at the *News* judges that Biaggi, indeed, was probably more in tune with the paper's editorial thinking than any other contender. But during the course of their investigation of the story, *News* editors say, they became convinced that Biaggi was lying to them and the question of philosophic affinity became moot.

Like the *Times*, the *News* had pursued various earlier reports on Biaggi with little success. And they did not successfully follow up on the *Times* report last October about Biaggi's grand jury appearance. The *News* tip about his taking the Fifth Amendment came in a Jan. 18 luncheon at which the editors were questioning another mayoral candidate—a man who had heard of the incident but could not confirm it. One of the first to be told about the new lead was Sam Roberts, a political reporter only five years out of Cornell ('68) but already a top hand at the *News*. A month earlier, Roberts had lunched with Biaggi and asked about all the rumors trailing him. "Let's be practical," the congressman said then. "If I had anything to worry about, I wouldn't be running."

On Jan. 21, a Sunday, Roberts was among those waiting to question Biaggi at a special session in the *News* Building's seventh-floor conference room. The congressman called reports about his taking the Fifth "completely inaccurate," but talked over discussing the matter in detail. Then Biaggi, law partner Bernard Ehrlich and press



secretary Mortimer Matz (a *News* veteran himself) moved out to the paper's deserted Special Features section to prepare a 1½-page typed statement that concluded: "I again categorically state that I answered each and every question before the grand jury on immigration matters and did not involve the Fifth Amendment in connection therewith." Asked if he had ever taken the Fifth, Biaggi huddled with his aides for ten or fifteen minutes more. Then, recalls Roberts, "he said, 'No,' and shook his head with that look of grim determination he has."

The *News* editors were suspicious but, like their counterparts at the *Times*, not yet ready to give the Biaggi story top priority. Roberts checked sources in New York but also remained tied up with a series on banking; another investigative reporter, William Sherman, was assigned to go through all the pertinent immigration bills, but he was also working on a Medicare series. Dick Oliver, assistant city editor for special investigations, directed the operation and pitched in on the reporting himself, but after two months what the *News* had was mostly second-hand reports.

In March, with the story not solid enough to print, Oliver and Roberts sat down to map a new plan of action. First they would run Biaggi's carefully-crafted statement to the *News* under the noses of various high government officials "hoping for a reaction, an indignant response ... something," says Roberts. Then, since the date was fast approaching past which the Conservative party could no longer shed Biaggi as a candidate, they went directly to the Conservatives. Their argument was that the party leaders might be embarrassed by future disclosures and that they might have been misled by Biaggi; the idea was to have them put pressure on Biaggi to get the testimony made public.

The notion was unprecedented, but not without promise. Some weeks earlier, Managing Editor O'Neill had talked with then U.S. Attorney Whitney North Seymour—not about the facts of the case, he says, but about the legal restrictions on grand jury minutes. "We simply investigated with him what was possible—how one would go about

getting the release of such minutes for overriding public reasons," says O'Neill. "He gave me a copy of the appropriate sections of the Federal court rules and he pointed out the extremely limited circumstances under which these minutes could be released."

According to Rule 6 (e), grand jury testimony can be released 1) to "the attorneys of the government for use in the performance of their duties," 2) on the order of a court "preliminarily to or in connection with a judicial proceeding," and 3) to a defendant "upon a showing that grounds may exist for a motion to dismiss the indictment because of matters occurring before the grand jury." None of this was specifically applicable to the Biaggi case, obviously, but the thinking at the *News* seemed to be that Biaggi was coming under a form of public indictment by virtue of all the rumors and impending stories and that conceivably he might have the right to request disclosure of the minutes to clear the air. Seymour maintains that he ventured no opinion on the outcome of such a request by Biaggi. But the *News* editors came away with "the feeling and some hopes—though no actual commitment," according to O'Neill, "that this would not be opposed by the U.S. attorney's office." (Indeed, when, Biaggi made his first transparent request for a limited judicial review of his grand jury testimony, Seymour insisted on release of the full transcript with all names other than Biaggi's deleted.)

Some Conservative leaders were initially receptive to the plan but on March 10 the party turned it down. State chairman J. Daniel Mahoney told the *News*: "If you have information to which we're not privy, it seems you ought to go to Biaggi." Sam Roberts had done just that several days before, but Biaggi was not interested in applying for release of the testimony. State authorities also were approached, on the grounds that a false statement by Biaggi to the Conservative party—to clear the way for his nomination—might be deemed a violation of the state election law. But these officials, too, demurred, telling the *News* that a complainant with proper legal standing would be required. The state's hands-off reaction does not

square with subsequent charges that Gov. Nelson Rockefeller was the man pulling strings behind the scenes to cause Biaggi's embarrassment. Given Rockefeller's often-Machiavellian manner, of course, it doesn't prove that he wasn't either.

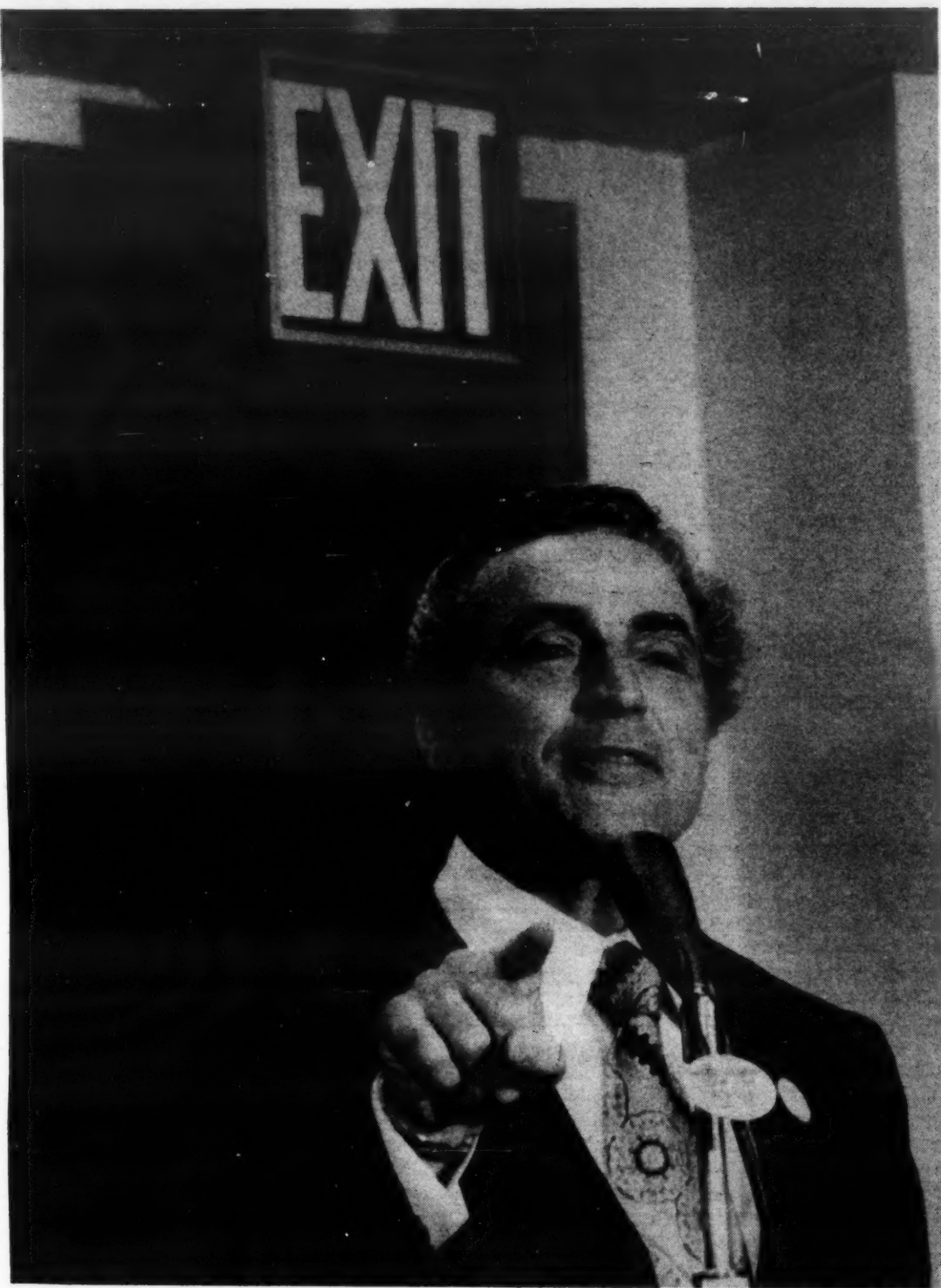
Some of the *News* people involved with the story thought they should go ahead and print it then. They had gotten additional corroboration from authoritative sources—including one "law enforcement official" in Washington who rendered a "hearty guffaw" after reading the Biaggi denial. Of these sources, Roberts says: "They knew they were doing something illegal perhaps ... their mood was something on the order of 'who's Biaggi trying to kid?' " And as Biaggi looked stronger as a candidate, that indignant attitude grew stronger, Oliver recalls. Still, the paper's editors decided to try one more confrontation with Biaggi himself.

On April 17, Biaggi was told that the *News* would run the story next day. Once again he denied it—saying in response to specific questions that he had never taken the Fifth Amendment, never refused to answer questions on the grounds they were not germane, never refused to testify at all. "We asked him why he didn't petition the court or Seymour's office to have the minutes released," recalls Roberts. "But he said he would not. He talked about the sanctity of the grand jury and said, 'You don't believe me.' I walked him down to the car and he insisted he was telling the truth. I stood on 42nd Street and almost literally pleaded with him. I said, 'Christ, if you're telling the truth, why not clear things up? For your sake, not mine!'"

It was 4:40 p.m. Upstairs, in O'Neill's office, the editors realized that it was too late to make the next day's first edition (deadline: 5 p.m.). They talked about going ahead for the later editions with a story saying Biaggi had lied about the Fifth Amendment or, more circumspectly, with a piece that said that despite all the rumors about Biaggi's having lied, he refused to settle the question by requesting release of the minutes. In the end, however, they decided to spend yet another day checking the story. "We were fairly sure, but after all this was a grand jury appearance we were talking about, and there were a lot of stop-Biaggi forces at work around town," says Roberts. "We were not interested in getting a beat," says Mike O'Neill. "There was a genuine concern about this story."

Any possibility of scoring a beat vanished at 10 p.m. when the first edition of the *Times* arrived with the Biaggi story on page one. The *News* city desk immediately called O'Neill, Oliver and Roberts at home but the 10:40 deadline for the three-star edition was already passing as Oliver strode into the office to start writing. He put his piece together from information already in the house plus fresh material that Roberts was getting in urgent phone calls made from his East Side apartment. Most important was the advice from *News* sources that the *Times* lead was wrong about the number of questions Biaggi refused to answer; the *Times* said at least 30, actually it was 16. Oliver's story was on the press by 2:30 a.m. for the paper's final edition—the biggest run of the night.

Next day, the *News* followed up with a story about one of the key questions on which Biaggi had taken the Fifth: the \$7,200 consultant's job at an advertising agency arranged for his daughter Jacqueline by Martin Tannenbaum, the late Democratic wheeler-dealer. *Times*man Gage says he had no information on that point when he wrote his story, and he concedes that he misinterpreted some information from one source to come up with the erroneous 30 questions. But he was first nonetheless, and the *News* would have to find consolation in its greater accuracy and an accolade



from U.S. Attorney Seymour for all those backstage efforts to surface the story officially. "What the *News* did was terribly honorable," Seymour told me, "and the irony is that they were scooped. I think they paid the price for responsible journalism."

Regardless of who broke the story, reporters who worked on it for both the *News* and the *Times* found themselves under some criticism—even from friends and colleagues. Hadn't they been guilty of illegally receiving grand jury information? Wasn't it a man's right to testify secretly before a grand jury? And wasn't it also his right to take the Fifth Amendment? The most serious complaint on that last score came to the *Times* from the paper's own Washington bureau in a letter to Abe Rosenthal signed by some 20 staffers including top investigative reporter Seymour Hersh. The crux of the criticism was that Gage's original story had not sufficiently emphasized that taking the Fifth Amendment is a Constitutional privilege whose use should not imply any wrongdoing.

"If it was a complaint, it was a complaint lodged in affection and loyalty and to portray it otherwise would be totally false," says Eileen Shanahan, one of the original half-dozen Washington *Times* persons who found themselves objecting to the story over lunch on the day it ran.

"It was merely a matter of people feeling free enough to write to their boss and say, gosh, the *Times* didn't live up to our own best standards of care on that one!"

Self-criticism in journalism needs to be nurtured, but that particular complaint about Gage's story seems a bit overdrawn. In his fourth paragraph, the reporter wrote: "The Fifth Amendment guarantees the right of an individual to refuse to answer questions that might tend to incriminate him." The luncheon bull session that spawned the letter to Rosenthal actually began with some soul-searching about stories that looked "inadequately sourced," a valid area of sensitivity in Watergate, D.C., at that point in time, when new scoops surfaced daily on the basis of grand jury leaks. And the *Times* folk might understandably be even more sensitive because so many of those scoops belonged to their national competitor—*The Washington Post*. Indeed, their rage at Gage, to overstate it, looks like a textbook case of transference.

Biaggi did some complaining himself, of course. In paid TV time on four local stations, he charged that he was the victim of "a plot of attempted political and character assassination" and he named the plotters: "boss Alex Rose" of the Liberal party and the *Times*. The *News* came in for

some rough treatment, too, when the Biaggi camp apparently helped to arrange a press conference at which ex-convict James Forella was supposed to accuse *News* reporter Bill Sherman of offering him a bribe. Forella was involved in the now famous 1959 incident during which Mario Biaggi, then still a policeman, shot and killed a young gunman inside a Cadillac convertible. Biaggi people tipped TV reporters to the story and apparently provided two beefy escorts to bring Forella to the WCBS-TV studio. Under the camera's eye, Forella backed off; he claimed Sherman had harassed him (the reporter denies it) but never made the promised charges about being offered large sums of money or anything else he wanted.

Gabe Pressman, who arranged an exclusive TV interview with Biaggi (during which the candidate admitted he had "misled" the public), is one of those journalists with mixed feelings over the Biaggi affair. He is particularly disturbed by the obvious lip-licking of some of his colleagues as Biaggi's admittedly shabby attempt to use the Federal court was turned back on him to provide grounds for the ultimate publication of his grand jury testimony. "In the immediate mayoral situation, I guess it was better that it got out," says Pressman of the Fifth Amendment story, "because we got a better picture of the man. But to the extent that it shook up and weakened the tradition of grand jury secrecy and to the extent that it gave us a picture of the vindictiveness of the Federal courts, I think it was disquieting."

Most of those involved in the Biaggi story emphasize that it was the congressman's lying that got him into trouble—not the fact that he took the Fifth. But the notion that Biaggi could have prevented all the front page publicity by admitting his action when the story first leaked out is a little hard to accept. If the newspapers themselves didn't follow up that story—Gage, for instance, says he would have used the information as a stepping-off point for further investigations into Biaggi's affairs—the candidate's opponents surely would have. Burt Neuborne, the American Civil Liberties Union lawyer who filed an amicus brief against disclosure of the grand jury record, has an even wilder idea. He suggests that Biaggi might have used the publicity to his own advantage by presenting his invocation of the Fifth Amendment as another skirmish between Congress and the Executive branch—thereby winning over the city's liberals. "But taking the Fifth is still slimy and reprehensible to him," shrugs Neuborne. "After all these years he still sees the Constitution more as something to hide behind than to wrap yourself in."

If Watergate wasn't enough to dramatize the fact that there is no such thing as absolute secrecy these days—especially for government officials and even inside a grand jury room—the Biaggi case did. The ACLU's Neuborne would upgrade the procedural safeguards of grand jury secrecy so that no citizen is easily put in the bind that Biaggi got himself into. But Neuborne agrees with practically all the reporters and editors who worked on the Biaggi story that "once a free press got the facts, it was obliged to print them."

The provisions for grand jury secrecy—even the Fifth Amendment itself—are unquestionably basic elements of a Constitutional framework designed to serve the public good. They are not to be treated lightly. But a responsible press also serves the public good, and its wide latitude of freedom is firmly rooted in that same Constitutional framework. It is an obviously untidy system and one rich in controversy when something like the Biaggi story comes along—but it seems to work.

Seventh Avenue Spree

BY SHEILA CHARAS

It's seven o'clock on a Sunday evening, and as the Lexington Avenue subway hurtles us through black space, I can't keep my envious eyes off the low-class, high-style personage sitting composedly across from me, wearing her look of utter disdain for it all as easily as she wears the little silver ring in her right nostril. Her costume is *outré*, only to be carried off by an Afro-American pubescent princess: A big, black, newsboy's cap, with pompom, pulled low down over one eye. Light blue wide-cuffed pants and a white puff-sleeved blouse, lady clean, edged with exquisite little embroidered flowers. Shiny red button earrings, armloads of West Indian bracelets. And that nose ring, that look, those fuck-me shoes by A.S. Beck . . . But I'm on my way to begin a week long presswatch at the Plaza Hotel, where the *haute* ready-to-wear American Designers group will be showing its fall collections to the nation's fashion editors from June 18 through 22 this year, so at 59th Street I stop staring and get off the train.

"By the clothes she wears, every woman creates a portrait of the woman of her time. . . . Because it's the way we feel, today's fashion is moving away from rebellion, abstraction and confusion toward . . . a respect for the rules . . . The fall 1973 clothes by American designers clearly foresee a more conformist trend, with individuality . . . for icing." This is Monday's eight a.m. wake-up message from Miss Eleanor Lambert, organizer of the American Designers' semi-annual press weeks and aging fairy God-mother to the Fashion Mafia, the elite group of designers—Anne Klein, Oscar de la Renta, Halston and Adele Simpson among them—handled by her public relations firm. Her *Forecast*, keynoting the week to come, is accompanied by the magic luminosity of \$3,000 worth of slides, which we watch, enraptured, still chewing the crusts of our Continental breakfasts, as a cleverly selected constellation of women is beamed at us: A sailor-suited Modigliani *penseuse* . . . Marilyn Monroe, her image forever wedded to Warhol's imagination . . . Gertrude Stein, one of a series of "serious" women, a unique category in this company, although even she appears as "done" by Picasso.

The message is clear: that chick on the subway is dead. Worse, like anything else even vaguely freaky, hippie or ethnic, she's passé. No matter that Bianca (Mrs. Mick) Jagger made Eleanor's Ten Best Dressed list this year—for the duration of Press Week clothes will all look ladylike, natural, elegant, luxurious, and alike. They do, too, until even the beautiful ones make you yawn rather than gasp; you begin to think that all those editors who read *The New York Times*, or gossip about the quality of the wine that appeared in their rooms on Sunday night (compliments of the Plaza), or do needlepoint during the showings, while they are unquestionably rude, may not be so dumb after all.

Still, there's precious little in the copy dutifully churned out between showings and parties and elegant buffets to give anybody a clue about what's really going on during Press Week; most of the fashion writers present seemed content merely to pick up and report the trends, sometimes in words as sadly inept as these: "Bill [Blass] talked about fabrics which he said are very thin when used in his collection. 'There is no reason to have in our world heavy fabrics.'" [*Lincoln (Neb.) Evening Journal*, June 21, 1973]. And often not

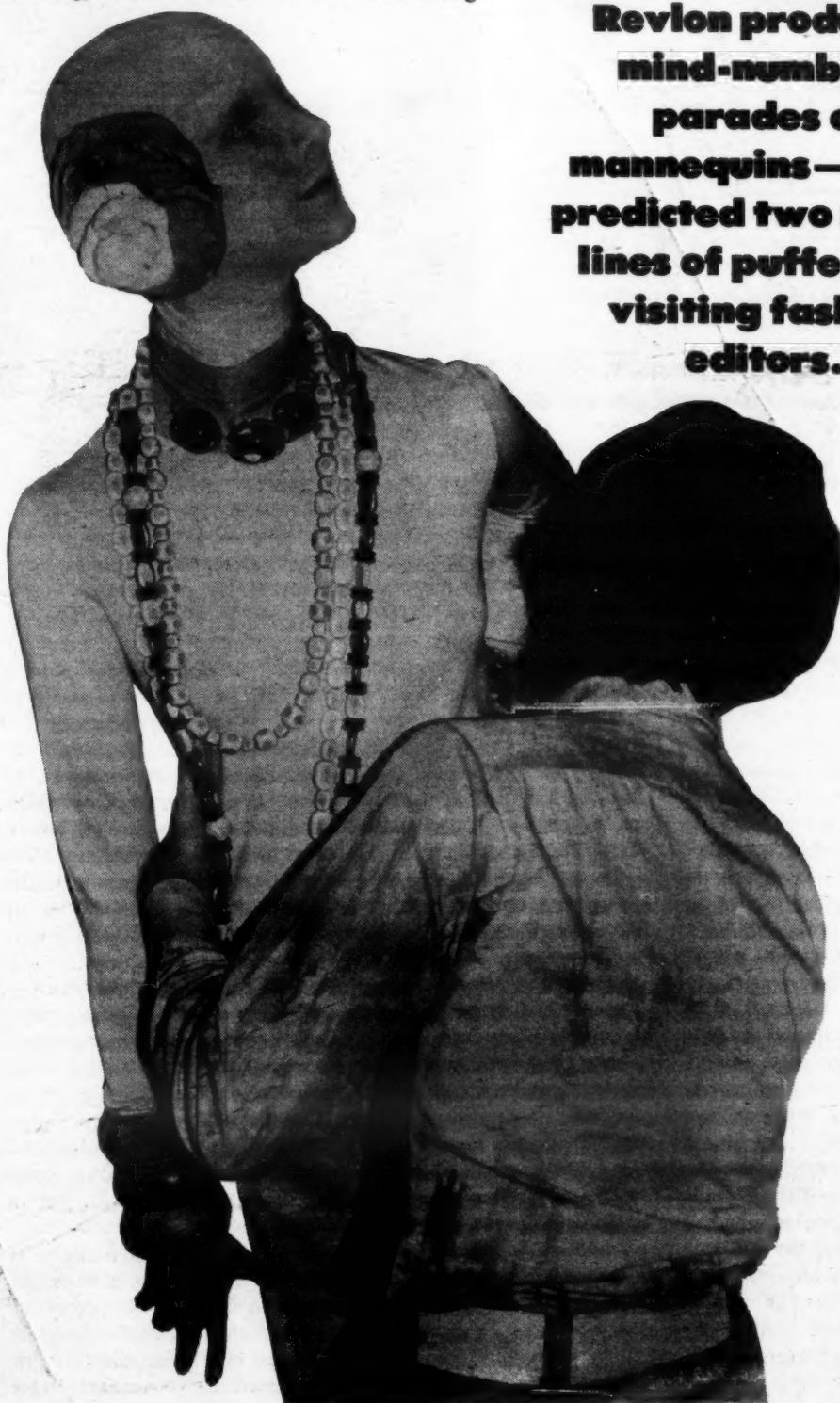
merely trends were picked up: "His [Geoffrey Beene, featured in the July *Town and Country* as the achiever's designer] newest proportion seemed to be the elongated overblouse for day in suits and two-piece dresses of solid or geometric jacquard wool jersey. Colors were gray, mustard, burgundy and taupe. Often the long matching alpaca scarf was used as a signature to emphasize the elongated look. His newest detail was the flange . . ." [*Atlanta Constitution*, June 20, 1973]. This is lifted right from Beene's press release for the showing—hardly a word has been changed.

Yet surely in these Watergate latter days it must have occurred to some of those women back home that you can't wear your individuality like a smile iced onto a gingerbread cookie any more (besides, it might be a frown), and that the "newest" pseudo-choices offered by the mass-marketers of Barthesian mythologies are no longer enough for women or for any of us. Well, maybe it *hasn't* occurred to them. Eleanor told me that in the South, at least, women are not, even in 1973, so "sociology minded." And, with a few heartening

exceptions, not all from top-rated writers, there was no "sociology," little original thought or acute observation, and not even much lively writing in the 30 newspapers I read for their coverage of American Designers Week. (Approximately 200 papers had staff listed as attending.)

But if there was not much exciting copy being written, there was, after all, no news being made. For most of the best fashion writers, press weeks are not merely staged, but restaged events. The fashion glossies like *Vogue* and *Harper's*

Fashion Week came to New York again this June, complete with strawberries in port, quiche lorraine, "Charlie" bags full of Revlon products, mind-numbing parades of mannequins—and a predicted two million lines of puffery by visiting fashion editors.



Sheila Charas is a free-lance writer who lives in Brooklyn.



Model glides down the runway at the Plaza Hotel during the American Designers' semi-annual press week organized by Eleanor Lambert, (above).

Bazaar, the fabulous John Fairchild's savvy *Women's Wear Daily*, the big fashion newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *The Detroit Free Press* send their writers to the buyers' showings, usually scheduled a month or so in advance of press week. The wire services have to follow suit, then cover the same story again during the press weeks, because so many member papers, especially the smaller ones which depend most heavily on the wires for fashion news, want coverage later, when their down-homey readers have more interest in the coming season's styles. If the journalistic heavyweights show up again at all, it's to fill in on a collection which the paper missed at its opening, or to cover an event like Revlon's much mocked Psycho-Scentual breakfast (strawberries in port, *quiche lorraine*) this year. That one, which gave the fashion press a chance to inhale Each of the six separate essences which go to make up "Charlie" (Charles Revson II's first unisex perfume, expected to top \$7-million in sales in its first year), then confide their "psychological reactions" to a portable microphone, even made *The Village Voice*, where Blair Sabol observed that "this breakfast bunch was so grabby that before the show began they were already copping any extra "Charlie" bags [canvas totes crammed with Revlon perfumes and toiletries] or personal handbags that might be lying around. Later one lady stole the sheet off the table and a centerpiece."

In Paris, designers show to both the press and the buyers in the same day, but here most newspapers, if they can afford a first-hand look at the collections at all, find that covering the buyers' showings—at the rate of 2 or 3 per day as compared to a well-organized press week's 6 to 9—is just too expensive. Instead, many editors and reporters participate in a grinding, glittering two-week fashion merry-go-round that began this June with a weekend in Montreal, where the Quebec government played host to the U.S. fashion press, and airplane tickets were free for the taking, although many newspapers did pay for their own. Next, the New York Couture Business Council,

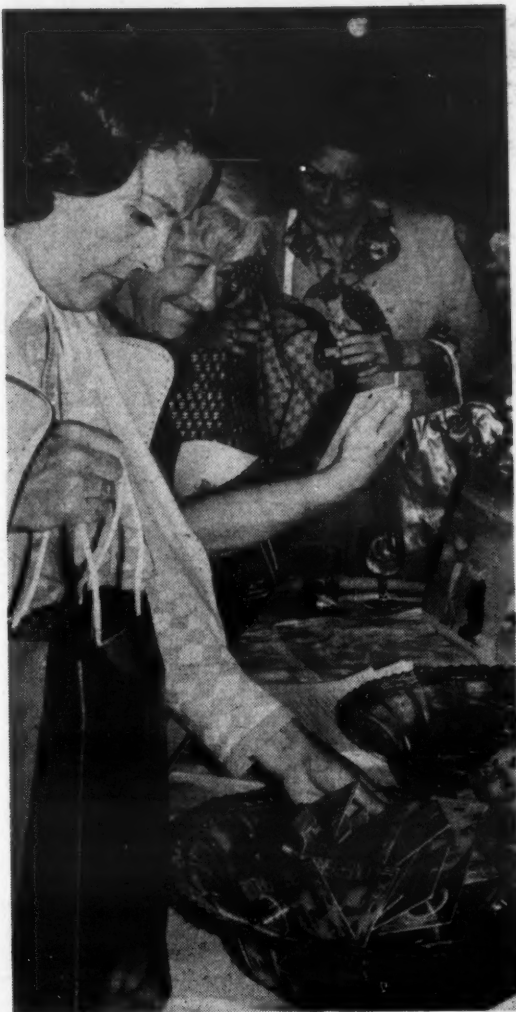


Mildred Sullivan's less prestigious spin-off from Eleanor's original group, held its press week at the Hilton. After Mildred, there was the Men's Fashion Association weekend at Spring Lake, New Jersey, with the 22-billion dollar menswear industry holding clinics, discussing trends without spotlighting individual designers, and handing out a lot of solid information to the press. Then, finally, the Plaza.

The basic expenses for Designers Week—acres of chandeliered hotel space, press room, slides, phones, staff, the daily "time-saving" Continental breakfasts—come out of the kitty established by the designers and by auxiliary participants like Revlon, Lanvin-Charles of the Ritz, the Monsanto Wig Fibers Group and others, many of whom spent extra sums to treat the press to cocktail parties or elegant meals. The Wool Bureau's luncheon on Thursday featured showings by a group of young designers, whose inventive responses to some terribly predictable questions from the press may have caused a few people to gargle their champagne. Fashion Editor (female): "What advice would you give to someone starting out as a designer in New York?" Designer (male):

"Keep your legs together." That particular insight into Fashion, 1973, was not widely quoted on the womens' pages of this nation's newspapers.

Eleanor herself, a former journalist and the widow of Seymour Berkson, publisher of the *New York Journal-American*, charges the American Designers Group no fee, maybe because she really believes her own statement that the Week is done for the benefit of the press and "is not a promotion thing." She quick-changes from a fragile, almost self-effacing fashion butterfly to a Dragon Lady, however, when forced to think about the accusations of managing editors, who she says insult their own fashion staffs by believing they are "so venal as to be bought for an \$89.00 dress." (The Professional Standards Committee of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association assigned Carol Sutton of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* to report on the fashion press beebe scene a year ago. This year her name was not on the Designers Week attendance list, nor was her newspaper's.) Their "hullabaloo," she says, may



Fashion editors load up on freebies, then settle down to turn out their copy, much of it puffery.

cause even the press week tradition of door prizes (a wool blanket and a hairdryer were two this time) to die in this "terrible atmosphere of mistrust."

From Eleanor, no fashion editor "ever got a bean," and although the American Designers group did, until five or six years ago, pay transportation expenses directly to those newspapers which would accept the money, she denies having either the power or desire to "boss the press," as it has been said that she does. Mildred Sullivan, however, was quoted last year as saying that her own organization does pay transportation expenses for some editors, though not hotel bills. Meanwhile, during American Designers Week 115 of the non-commuting editors were ensconced at the Plaza, where even a pack of cigarettes costs double your money, and the gossips said that those who stayed elsewhere often did so because of advertising deals. Of course, every woman I spoke to was herself strictly ethical—it was always the other gal who was rolling in plugola.

The truth about press objectivity here is probably most clearly stated not in terms of ethics, but as a power equation. The power of her own greed to some extent determines how much a given woman will pick for herself out of a field of freebies, whose real function anyhow is not to bribe, but to befuddle, to help create a magic atmosphere in which everything is free, but everything bears an ad, and the takers, as Pinocchio discovered, are also the jackasses. But the real discretionary power of the press is not the fashion writer's. It lies with her paper's managing editor and publisher; and, swinging over their heads is the brutal club of advertising revenues, wielded in this instance not by any designer or designer's group, but by the local retailers of



fashion—the stores. The real question is not whether the fashion reporter can be bought for an \$89.00 dress, or a sackful of cosmetics, or a pair of striped socks, but whether her newspaper can be bought by tens of thousands of dollars in daily retail advertising billings. At least one fashion press pro, not present at American Designers Week this year, has been privately complaining about the ignominies of her situation with a major West coast newspaper. The paper, with heavy fashion coverage and "incredible" selling power, is not an easy pushover; still it requires her "day-to-day subservience" to its advertisers' whims, an insult to this woman's professional ethics which topsy-turves Eleanor Lambert's view of the fashion editor/managing editor relationship.

For other fashion writers and editors the situation is different. The Knight chain, which owns prosperous newspapers like *The Miami Herald*, *The Detroit Free Press*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, backs up its idealistic management with plenty of cash. Its fashion writers, who work under standards which apply throughout the chain, may accept merchandise from stores or manufacturers only in sample quantities. Rubye Graham, the *Inquirer's* top-rated fashion editor in the irreverent Lois Long tradition, said she "had to pay insurance on packages that went back" after her paper's policy changed, or endanger her job. But that job is *not* in danger when she runs a story, with photographs, on the 30 per cent discounts available on new-couture merchandise at Loehmann's, a store whose cut-rate merchandising methods designers and other retailers would like to keep low profile.

Consumerism is one big journalistic trend which is beginning to affect the fashion press, "sociology minded" or no. The subject dominated the designers-press panel which capped the week's schedule, and even the most traditionalist dispensers of the guiding "word" were doing price-oriented stories this year. The designers themselves were talking out of one side of their mouths about planned obsolescence being obsolete, while the other side was telling us about the "very rightness" of superluxe ostrich feathers, fox boas, and "firelit" (sequined) dresses. "Clothes to be mugged in," muttered one big city editor, and Micki Jo Van Deventer of the *Stillwater [Okla.] News Press*, among others, thought such extravagance was incongruous with the way her readers lived.

Another media trend, which is so far

making hardly any fashion world waves, is the successful marketing of almost everything via television. This year, for the first time, CBS network stars like Sally Struthers and Loretta Swit discussed TV fashion with designers. But the panel was actually conceived by CBS public relations assistant Monica Lahey as a way of getting the network onto the fashion pages of the newspapers. Only designer Willi Smith was really thinking about the untapped marketing potential of the television medium, and the whole deal, like the rest of Press Week, never even made it onto the CBS Morning News. In fact, there was not a TV camera in sight all week, and only 30-odd radio and television fashion commentators, mostly from the morning talk shows, were on hand. Two women from North Carolina were taping separate Press Week specials to be shown in that state, but for the most part, without a heavy advertising tie-in on TV, fashion is rarely considered to be news by the networks.

In fashion journalism, the bad old ways die slowly. Up until 1970, the watershed year of the Midi, women depended on fashion editors, who tended to be social leaders or climbers writing with a very personal tone, often using only their given name in bylines. Then some editors, according to Eleanor Lambert, "got too personal about the wild kind of clothes . . . They went too overboard on the Midi, and frightened women." Frightened them, perhaps, into thinking for themselves, so that now, in the big cities at least, a more critical attitude is beginning to be the norm. It shows in the diminished amount of space given to fashion by the daily *New York Times*, and also in a different type of reporting in certain papers, no longer limited to designer clothes, no longer so consistently favorable to the collections that do get coverage.

It seems quite possible that within a few years the old style of fashion puffery will be dominated and transformed by the electronic media, and the newspaper fashion writers will assume a truly critical role. When that happens, people like Eleanor may find their power lines unplugged. But the future has not gotten here yet. To most of those expected two million lines of copy about the American Designers, the very special words which Anne Klein's third husband, Chip Rubinstein, murmured to the press while commenting on her latest collection might apply: "It's amazing—how nothing is everything."

Misunderstanding McLuhan

BY RICHARD SCHICKEL

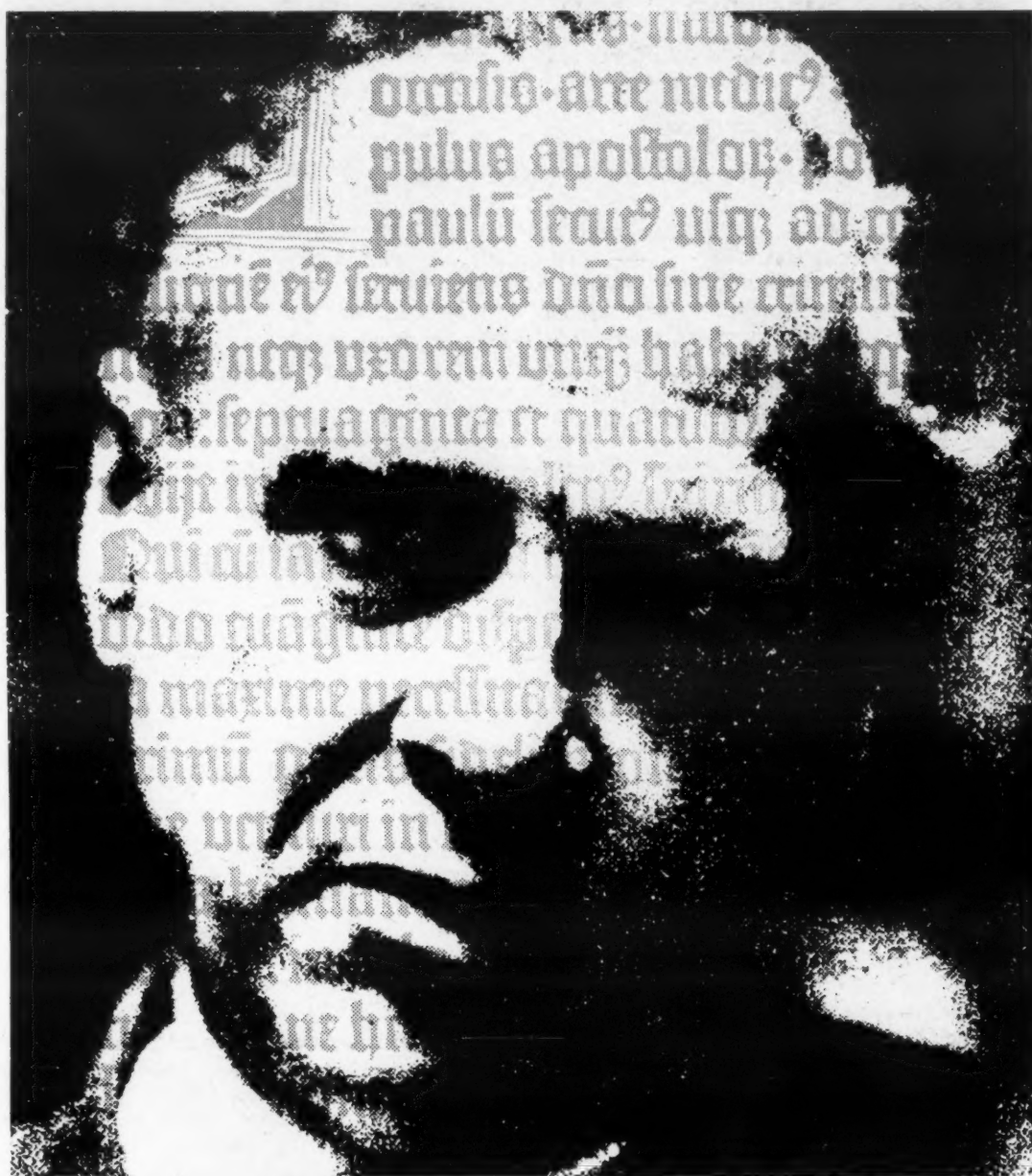
In 1965—My God, can it have been eight years ago?—I wrote a piece on Marshall McLuhan for *Harper's*. It was the first major article on him in a national magazine and it preceded, by a few weeks, Tom Wolfe's more famous "What if he's right?" piece in *New York*, then the *Herald Tribune's* Sunday supplement. My piece wasn't exactly a scoop. Like a lot of people hanging around literature and communications, I had been hearing vaguely about McLuhan for several years and I remember attaching a clipping of a column about him by Max Lerner—of all people—to my memo suggesting the article. Indeed, it was only after getting a commitment from *Harper's* that I settled down to read all of *Understanding Media*, McLuhan's *summa theologica*.

So I don't claim any remarkable prescience in this matter. Like all journalists who try to make their living out of social and cultural commentary, it's part of my job to be alert to activities along what McLuhan himself used to call the DEW line of intellectual life. In fact, what I'll be arguing in this piece is that I wasn't alert enough to the full import of the stirrings I was responding to, and neither was Wolfe or the rest of the gang that rushed in along the trail we broke toward this rich new Canadian gold strike.

Which is not to say that I think we were wrong, journalistically, to single McLuhan out from all the half-cracked academics of the world for extensive coverage or that he—or we—were entirely wrong about the importance of what he was saying. On the whole, I think the stir he caused was salutary. Writing in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (also in 1965), Dr. Ben Lieberman, a severe if not altogether brilliant critic of McLuhan, had to concede that he was "right to thrust out at the pipsqueak communication theories of the academicians and at the smug assumptions of most of the media leaders." Or, as Michael Arlen wrote in these pages a while back, "he snapped us out of John Crosbyism." Also Dwight Macdonaldism and Marya Mannesism, defined by Arlen as "that bookish, culture-conscious, giggly-Brahmin state of mind" that afflicted nearly all writing (and discussion) of television. Indeed, without McLuhan I doubt that Arlen would have been invited to write the marvelous television reviews he began contributing to *The New Yorker* in 1966 or that John Leonard's witty "Cyclops" pieces would have started running, a little after that, in *Life*. As I hope no one needs to be reminded, there was some truth even in McLuhan's most noisome catch phrases. The medium is surely the message—partly. We have, thanks to a growing (and tightening) communications network, become a global village. Sort of. Some media really are hot—i.e., more convenient to cram full of facts and information—than some others which might as well be called "cool" instead of Spot or Rover or something. There is a danger—as the giggly-Brahmins keep demonstrating—in being too linear and sequential in our thinking. And surely print conditions us to exalt this mode over all others. And so on.

But I've come to bury McLuhan, not to praise him, however faintly, all over again. As I write, I have next to me two of the several anthologies of pieces about him that appeared as soon as the first wave of comment had broken. The

Richard Schickel is a movie critic and author whose latest book, His Picture in the Papers: Speculation on Celebrity in America, will be published in November by Charterhouse.



Back in the mid-sixties, the professor from Toronto was an international communications guru. But in rushing pell-mell to canonize him, the media missed the message.

striking thing about these collections is the repetitiveness of the articles they contain. One after the other synthesizes McLuhan's theory of a human "sensorium" unbalanced by excessive dependency on print, perhaps beginning to right itself as electronic communication forced a reorchestration of the senses, stressing the tribal—that is the "oral" and "tactile" modes of communication—rather than the more individualistic print mode. And nearly every piece—my own included—stressed the author's concern that McLuhan's subtleties and sweep may be lost through this inevitably reductive process in which we were indulging. All of us took pains to implicitly praise ourselves for making our way through the

complexities of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* in order to perform this service for our readers.

Looking back now, it seems to me there was less than meets the eye in McLuhan's two major works. I mean, the books were long and his arguments were indeed, as I said at the time, "at once repetitive and digressive." But as so many proved, they were not really at all difficult either to grasp or to summarize. What had happened was a fairly familiar phenomenon in the reviewing racket; we had spent a lot of time with these volumes of his—not merely because they were so long, but because they were so curiously organized. Or rather disorganized. I remember worrying away at them, making sure I dug out the logic of McLuhan's argument (such as it was) accurately, protecting my flanks, since at this point in time, no matter how you hedged, any article on McLuhan—even if you were striving for a certain neutrality of tone—would be construed by a scandalized literary community as a defense of the class enemy. Once you make this kind of commitment, in time and energy, one tends, almost inevitably, I think, to exaggerate not only the value of the work at hand but its difficulty.*

In short, those of us who gave the McLuhan

*Something similar has gone on recently with Thomas Pynchon's novel, *Gravity's Rainbow*, which demanded so much of reviewers that we almost had no option but to praise it. If it were bad, what were we doing spending three months reading it? I now think, certainly, that it was less good than I said it was in my review in *World*.

His book is one that I shall treasure . . . we cannot read *Understanding Media* without multiplying our awareness one thousand fold of the way things are with us

—Paul West in
The Canadian Forum, Oct. 1964

Some of us have become aware of Marshall McLuhan. He is like a thunderclap; you cannot overlook him once you have been nearby. There are those, of course, who do not like thunderclaps. The collies hide under the dining table. The poodles and the terriers variously bark and yap. The Great Danes look pained With enormous erudition, he has brought the whole Western intellectual tradition into a single hypothesis; that the basic experience of western man has been shaped mainly by the invention of type Here is a man who says the development of the electronic forms for experience wholly transforms it: that the culture shift we are a half-century or more into is as fundamental as the shift from medieval to Renaissance experience

—Arthur W. Foshay in
Educational Leadership, Oct. 1963

bandwagon its initial shove were, among other things, demonstrating to the world that we were bright fellows. And unafraid, too, since our subject was, without doubt, mounting a radical and subversive attack on the literary culture to which, theoretically at least, we owed our primary allegiance. I say theoretically because, of course, journalists stand in ambiguous relationship to the literary and academic worlds. We are often invited to write for their magazines, participate in their forums, even teach in their institutions. But we are ever suspect of superficiality and commercialism, just as they are suspect, in our eyes, of a dangerous unworldliness (leading, of late, to excessive insistence on ideological correctness at the expense of real understanding about how the world works). All of which is a way of adding that most of us probably had a built-in bias favoring McLuhan, the provincial scholar, described by a former student in one of the many profiles about him as "a bit of a campus joke," now busily outraging the likes of Dwight Macdonald ("Impure nonsense, nonsense adulterated by sense") and Benjamin DeMott ("the great gift offered is, ultimately, the release from consciousness itself"). He seemed to be our kind of guy—a swooping, sweeping generalizer, untroubled by any great need to offer definitive historical or observational proof for them, a veritable pack rat scuttling from one room to another in our culture bringing back disparate bright baubles which he claimed were related to one another, principally because he treasured them. Such a character may not fit very comfortably within any known academic tradition, but we, the journalists, knew the type very well; we were brothers under the skin. In the first fervor of enthusiasm he did indeed "sound like [emphasis added] the most important thinker since Newton, Darwin, Freud, Einstein and Pavlov," as Wolfe put it. And that sound was as music to our ears.

But, of course, we were being seduced, whether consciously or unconsciously I still cannot say. In any event, the self-styled media expert was demonstrating mastery of his subject in a highly practical way, manipulating the media to transform himself from campus joke to—as it turned out—an international joke; and we were his entirely willing dupes, prisoners not merely of our desire for a good story, our desire to shake things up, but, much more important, of a strange failure to ask the man certain basic questions, to pry away at a large group of evasions which would have piqued the blood lust of less fancy journalistic types—police reporters, for example.

For instance, McLuhan was less than forth-

coming about the larger implications of his work. Implicitly, his argument posited a cultural catechism, one which would not merely destroy literary culture as we knew it, but politics, education, all known economic systems, *everything*. In an English television symposium one speaker quite correctly noted in McLuhan's work "an icy undertone which strikes terror." Not unreasonably, people wanted to know what, if anything, he thought we might do to stay upright, perhaps even surf along on the tidal wave he seemed to be predicting. At the end of my *Harper's* piece I noted that he had remained silent on this point but added, quite sincerely, that I thought it was "in his character for him to speak to it before he is finished." But he never has. Instead, we have had endless variations on this statement: "I am an investigator. I make probes. I have no point of view. I do not stay in one position . . . I DON'T EXPLAIN—I EXPLORE." Now, that is very cute, and at first it was all right. There would be time enough later, when all the insights and epigrams were sorted out, to write a sequel (McLuhan kept telling interviewers that *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and *Understanding Media* were but the first parts of a trilogy) in which he made himself very clear about the exact dimensions of his Brave New World and what we might yet do to somewhat shape it more to our liking. One was especially encouraged by his repeated assertions that "I'm perfectly prepared to scrap any statement I ever made on any subject once I find that it isn't getting me into the problem."

This was, to put it mildly, a put-on. McLuhan was adopting the stance of the scientist, ready to drop or modify a theory whenever it was successfully challenged, ready it seemed, to do so himself if one of his new "probes" invalidated an old one. It was very engaging, particularly in contrast to the literary world, where the letters columns of its journals are always full of communications from authors shoring up their defenses after some reviewer's attack, rarely conceding even a minor point. But as the years have worn on there has been no third book—not really. There has been a succession of non-books—*The Medium is the Massage*, *War and Peace in the Global Village*, *From Cliché to Archetype*—designed to a fare-thee-well by art directors, to whom, of course, McLuhan was as a god, since to them print is just a design element. Mostly the books themselves were composed of quotations from McLuhan's previous works and from works of others he approved; or examples, drawn from all the media, which proved—to his satisfaction anyway—

If one judges McLuhan as an individual writer . . . what remains paramount are his global standpoint and his zest for the new. As an artist working in a mixed medium of direct experience and historical analogy, he has given a needed twist to the great debate on what is happening to man in this age of technological speedup McLuhan, for all his abstractness, has found positive, humanistic meaning and the color of life in supermarkets, stratospheric flight, the lights blinking on broadcasting towers. In respect to the maladies of de-individualization, he has dared to seek the cure in the disease, and his vision of going forward into primitive wholeness is a good enough reply to those who would go back to it.

—Harold Rosenberg in
The New Yorker, Feb. 27, 1965

what he'd been saying all along.

What was going on in these later books was not scholarship, or even healthy popularization, but simple packaging, and almost from the beginning, we should have probed more deeply into the process by which McLuhan was being merchandised. For example, Tom Wolfe's piece is an account of the scholar on the road in San Francisco and New York, bringing his theories to business and communications executives in person, and for a fee. Now, Wolfe had great good sport with these scenes: "the upward busting hierarch executives," sitting in fluorescent-lighted, air-conditioned conference rooms, "the day's first bloody mary squirting through their capillaries" while "this man with part of a plastic neckband showing at the edge of the collar, who just got through *grading papers* for godsake," tells them "in effect, politely, they all know just about exactly . . . nothing . . . about the real business they're in." Or: McLuhan at Lutece, in New York, telling the shakers and makers, the people who've given their very lives to the proposition that a man should be able to eat in what they think is the city's best restaurant, anytime he feels like it, that the city itself is "obsolete." Delicious titillation along with the delicious food. "And all the gleaming teeth and glissando voices are still going *grack grack grack* in the same old way all around, all trying to get to the top of the city that will disappear."

Now, that's terrific stuff. It still makes me laugh to read it. But Wolfe was somewhat less than inquiring about the men picking up the tab that day—the late Howard Gossage, a San Francisco ad man, and Gerry Feigen, a surgeon turned psychiatrist, who as it turned out had pieces of McLuhan, the same way the mob used to have pieces of prizefighters. He was their heavyweight. And there were others in there, too—guys who knew not merely how to publish a book, but how to package it; the true message of a late McLuhan book was to be found on the colophon page, where the copyright notice might include three names, one of which might well be that of a corporation. There were more guys who knew how to profitably set up conferences at Paradise Island where the execs could sit at the master's feet away from the hurly-burly of the home office, others who could publish a pricey insider's newsletter, a sort of Kiplinger Report on media theory, so you could have the up-to-date line on the newest "extension

(continued on page 14)

Progress Report

Media executives find themselves confronting firsthand a story they have been covering for the past several years, as women all over town organize to fight discrimination within their companies. Following is a report on one group's success and four other efforts still to be resolved.

Traditionally, newsmagazines have been bastions of male supremacy at its most blatant—where the “girls” in the office not only supplied coffee but also dug out “facts,” leaving creative processes and loftier thinking entirely in the hands of the men. More than three years ago, *Newsweek* women elected to overturn the pattern by filing sex discrimination charges with the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. The complaint—the first such challenge by a group of women employed by the media—was dropped when management promised “substantial, rather than token changes.” But by May, 1972, after insufficient progress had been made, 51 women filed a second complaint. This June, the EEOC complaint was withdrawn as *Newsweek* editor and chairman Osborn Elliott and six representatives of the Women's Committee signed a Memorandum of Understanding designed to right some of the inequities.

The Memorandum covers hiring, promotion and training and provides specific goals, timetables and procedures. By the end of 1974, under the new terms, one-third of all writers and domestic reporters must be women, and no major department will be permitted to be without a woman writer for more than six consecutive months. One out of every three foreign correspondents named in 1974 must be a woman. Most important of all, by the end of 1975, a woman must head up one of the magazine's seven major editorial divisions. In an attempt to de-ghettoize the research category, the agreement also stipulates that “the percentage of all researchers who are men shall be approximately equal to the percentage of all writers who are women.” Eight men have become researchers since the original complaint was filed in 1970.

Three times a year, management will be required to submit reports with specific information about its efforts to hire and promote women. Differences between the Women's Committee and management will be referred to a Joint Review Committee and will go to arbitration, if necessary.

Though women at *Newsweek* are delighted with the agreement, many would also like to rid the magazine of sexist language and photos. An obvious recent example is the July 16 cover photo for the “games singles play” story, which showed a voluptuous, bikinied blonde against the backdrop of a California singles complex. “We were not at all pleased,” says writer Maureen Orth. “We know that sex sells, but we felt that if they wanted to use a picture of a vulgar female, why not have a vulgar male, too?” Several weeks ago, when they first saw the

projected cover, Orth and photo editor Joan Engels brought their objections to managing editor Edward Kosner, who set up a meeting with three people who had worked on the singles story, among them, reporter Phyllis Malamud. “To me it's a crotch picture,” says Malamud. “I'm not happy about that. But I couldn't argue that it was a sexist cover. It fairly represented what the story was about—the emergence during the past ten years of the single woman and her sexual attitudes.” Malamud's okay apparently ended the argument, but it scarcely resolved the issue.

...

In May, 1972, the National Organization for Women filed a petition with the Federal Communications Commission to deny the license of WABC-TV, the flag-ship station of the ABC network. No doubt action on the local level sensitized corporate management to some of the concerns of ABC women. Meetings between both sides began last summer, and a “company-sanctioned” Women's Action Committee was formally established in the fall.

In the intervening year, the women have accomplished several of their lesser goals. New job openings (except those above the middle-management level) are now publicized within the company. A computerized “skills bank” has been set up to facilitate mobility within the corporation. Grievance procedures have been created, although, interestingly, the women feel that none of the complainants thus far have had bonafide discrimination cases. A woman—Mary Jean Parsons—has been appointed employee relations counselor, and another—Eleanor Riger—has become the first female staff producer for ABC Sports. The employment picture has indeed improved somewhat. In March, personnel director Marie McWilliams told the Women's Action Committee that since September, 20 women had been added to the “officials and management” classification and another 12 to the “professional” category.

Such achievements, however, still amount to tokenism. Management has acknowledged that at present no department has a single woman earning more than one-half of that department's highest-paid man. At the beginning of the year, a generalized “affirmative action” plan was distributed company-wide. Yet thus far, no specific goals and timetables have been made known to the Women's Action Committee. “If we had that, we could kick them along,” says Hope Gaines, a secretary in the news department. “That's why they don't want us to have it. Till the time we do, our accomplishments will remain vague.”

...

NBC, according to its Women's Committee for Equal Opportunity, employs some 800 women, of whom 600 or so hold secretarial and clerical positions. Only 200 women—or less than one-tenth of the company's work force—have technical, professional or managerial jobs. In February of this year, WC=EO became the first broadcast group here to file sex discrimination charges with the EEOC.

That was not the route originally intended by the handful of women who began meeting quietly more than a year before. As their base of support increased, the women sought remedies from the personnel department, getting nowhere, they say, with their numerous proposals. In September, they delivered a formal presentation before the company's President's Council, headed up by NBC chief Julian Goodman. They suggested, among other things, that NBC appoint a female compliance officer to implement an affirmative action program; that job vacancies be posted; that a skills inventory be developed and utilized; that the secretarial system be restructured (secretaries are now paid according to their bosses' titles); that the company publish a newsletter including information about training programs; and that the tuition refund and loan program be liberalized to allow people without college degrees to take undergraduate courses. This last suggestion was the only one implemented to the satisfaction of the women.

Management attempted to refute the discrimination charges in the time-honored corporate manner—by preparing a slide show. “They had one of those carousel projectors, with slides done up by the art department showing graphs in lots of colors,” recalls Lois Farmer, a programmer and systems analyst. “After it was over, everybody sat there speechless. The next Monday, we filed our complaint. There was no sense in talking anymore.” The City's Human Rights Commission is now investigating and hopes to issue its finding well before the end of this year.

...

CBS women, the late-starters in the push for equal rights, are currently organized into three disparate but cooperative groups. Meeting at Broadcast House are two units—one for news personnel, the other mainly for secretaries. Across town is a third group of women who work at Black Rock, the corporate headquarters.

The first rumblings came from network newswomen earlier this year, after CBS President Arthur Taylor “threw down the gauntlet,” as one of them put it, by issuing a February policy statement many considered condescending as well as inaccurate. “Women and men have the same opportunities for employment and promotion within CBS,” wrote Taylor. “There is a single standard of qualification for employment, and for treatment after employment, for men and women.”

Network news women rebutted this and other generalities in an April 9 response to Taylor. They pointed out the glaring inequities in their own division, where only seven of the 86 on-air reporter-correspondents are women. As of June 30, female network news employees included six news writers (out of 25), three film editors (out of 64), one film crew member (out of 92) and 21 in the category of producer (out of 126). There are no female directors, although not surprisingly, all 92 secretaries are women. (CBS News President Richard Salant, conceding his “conscience was raised rather late,” says he is trying to rectify

this dismal situation. Among other improvements, two women have been added to the previously all-male graphic artists department and a female cameraman has recently been hired.)

Though they criticized Taylor sharply in the April memo, CBS women have kinder words for him now. On July 19, Taylor met with their representatives and listened to a presentation outlining a number of recommendations. At the end of the two-hour session, the CBS president promised to respond to every issue the women had raised. "We were extremely encouraged by his attitudes and the commitment he expressed," says Priscilla Toumey, manager of press services for the CBS Radio Division.

...

In a thoroughly clandestine atmosphere, some 80 *New York Times* women from various departments have filed sex discrimination charges with the EEOC and the city's Human Rights Commission. There appear to be no Deans among the tightly-knit team-players, who say only (in an official statement) that the complaint involves salaries, hiring and advancement and follows attempts "for more than a year to resolve the matter through discussion with management." Their lawyer, Harriet Rabb, says that so far the women have limited their talks with her to employment patterns—not whether female reporters get good assignments and are allowed to travel. Among the activists in the *Times* movement are Betsy Wade, head of the foreign copy desk, assistant metropolitan editor Grace Glueck and reporters Grace Lichtenstein, Rita Reif and Lesley Oelsner.

—T.P.

Up With People

Time Inc.'s first new magazine venture since the folding of *Life* hits newsstands in ten cities for a test run in mid-August. *People* (cover price: 35c), said to have been dreamed up by board chairman Andrew Heiskell in April, will be something of an expansion of the *Time* section of the same name. It will feature gossip, trivia and one or two celebrity interviews per issue. Photos, all in black-and-white except for the cover, will be culled from wire services or supplied by freelancers. The small editorial staff, half of them *Life* veterans, will be headed by Philip Kunhardt, managing editor of the special *Life* issue on Israel.

—T.P.

Bedtime

At last—the true story of why Sally Quinn wouldn't get into Clay Felker's bed. Well, maybe it wasn't *Felker's* bed, but it was one that *New York* magazine had set up for the occasion. Quinn had come to New York to pose for a cover photo to go with an Aaron Latham interview scheduled to run in the July 16 issue, but she balked when she spied satin sheets and a satin pajama top on a bed that was "not even brass."

The idea: Quinn abed in satin splendor with the heading, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO WAKE UP EVERY MORNING WITH SALLY QUINN? The pale compromise: a flattering photo of her posed on a steamer trunk, saying (without quotes) CBS BROUGHT ME HERE TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR BARBARA WALTERS.

—FRANCIE BARNARD

Teacher's Pet

A number of large publications, including *New York*, *Esquire*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The New York Times*, are carrying a full-page ad these days written by Jimmy Breslin and showing him holding a cigar in one hand and a highball in the other. Breslin's 600-word copy tells of a bail bondsman without much business who suddenly



lucks out and is thereby able to keep the author in Teacher's Scotch while he finishes writing a novel, mentioned by name in the ad. The ad is one of a series featuring such show business personalities as George Burns and Groucho Marx, none of whom also happens to be television news commentators.

Ordinarily, according to Lee Hanna, vice president of news for NBC television stations, staffers are not permitted to do endorsements, but Breslin is under freelance contract with WNBC-TV and, by his own admission, makes his own rules. "It's dumb and it's wrong, and I told him not to do it," says Hanna. "I chose to do it, and I do it. I do exactly as I please, I always have," says Breslin. "Oh, I heard something that somebody didn't approve or something, but Jesus, that don't bother me." Breslin insists he took on the assignment because of the valuable opportunity to promote his book: "The practicality of the matter is, you've got a chance to get in many publications a color picture of yourself with a goddamn notation that you've got a book coming out, with the title of the book. Anybody who doesn't take that shot ought to commit suicide. And show me one son-of-a-bitch that wouldn't do it."

As Breslin points out, there are exceptions to the no-commercials rule at NBC network—

for the stars of the "Today" show ("they hook up the Alpo dogfood and then they interview Henry Kissinger," says Breslin). But does Breslin worry about setting a precedent for local broadcasters? "The other people who broadcast can't write six fucking words," he replies. "How the fuck could you compare me with other people?"

—T.P.

Missed Opportunity

Rep. Frank Brasco (D-Brooklyn) has a residue of problems that are, as George S. Kaufman once said, forgotten but not gone. Brasco was accused in 1971 of receiving money in return for using muscle on the Post Office and Civil Service Committee. He arranged a lease of Post Office trucks for the Mafia-controlled ANR Leasing Co. Maryland U.S. Attorney George Beall tried to bring the case before a grand jury, but John Mitchell's Justice Department decided that there was insufficient evidence against him and stopped it.

No New York daily picked up the story seriously, nor its punchline: Brasco was one of the few Democrats on Wright Patman's Banking and Currency Committee to vote against investigating Watergate through that committee last October, before the election. Marjorie Boyd, in the April *Washington Monthly*, analyzed the Democratic committee members' behavior, inferring that Brasco's nay vote was a debt paid to the Nixon Administration for not pursuing the Post Office case.

At press time the *Daily News* had mentioned Brasco's connections with a company which has, as the congressman himself put it, a "bad reputation." The ANR Leasing Co. was located in the Bronx, Boyd reported, "well outside Brasco's Brooklyn district. And if anyone should have known that 'Gentleman' John Masiello, president of the ANR Leasing Co., was a member of the Vito Genovese family, it was Frank Brasco." Brasco had been assistant chief of the Brooklyn D.A.'s rackets bureau.

Attorney Beall refused to comment on the case but shrugged aside any political explanations. Representative Brasco told [MORE] that "as soon as I found out about this company's reputation I dropped them like hot-cakes." He denied receiving any money for his services or even that there was anything unusual about his efforts on the company's behalf. He explained that he voted against the October Watergate investigation because he didn't want to infringe on the rights of those under indictment. He harked back to his long-time civil libertarian record, stressing that he had voted against the House Un-American Activities Committee and the D.C. no-knock bill. When asked why he took an interest in a company with such a "questionable reputation" (he never used the word Mafia), he concluded after some thought that this was "a very interesting question."

—PETER KAPLAN

II

1010 WINS

New York Post

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Amsterdam News

Those who share the vision of Marshall McLuhan . . . are not pessimistic, for they realize that perhaps history is the arch-medium that molds the human race and its destiny in terms not of the absurd but rather of some statement of meaning discernible even to man.

—Neil P. Hurley, S.J.
in *America*, Feb. 18, 1967.

of man" a month before McLuhan blabbed to some itinerant journalist and the competition read about it in the newspapers.

Of course, all this was impossible. No individual could handle it all, and things like the special McLuhan issue of *Vogue*, supposedly edited by him, was in fact ghost-edited by academic friends. Indeed, around 1967-68 McLuhan was suffering from a brain tumor and until an operation cured it, his behavior was reportedly erratic and he was incapable of devoting himself to any project for long periods of time. According to at least one friend, he could barely keep his schedule straight, let alone determine whether he was getting his full monetary due from the many ventures undertaken in his name.

Be that as it may, the packagers were awfully clever. No word of McLuhan's illness seeped out until after it was over and though common sense—and a look at the work that was going out under his name—should have told people that he was no longer functioning as a scholar, but as a celebrity, suffering a life and a career much closer to that of a movie star (or perhaps, more properly, a permanent talk show guest), hardly anyone spoke of the matter in print.

Here one enters a dim realm. For it is written that it is not proper for journalists to inquire too deeply into the private lives, economic arrangements, modes of self-presentation, etc. of serious thinkers. Good taste and long-established literary convention dictate that we may brighten a consideration of a man's ideas with a few homey details, but essentially we are supposed to stress thought, not "color." Generally, I agree with that stricture. On the other hand, it is apparent that there is a relatively new phenomenon loose in the world, the multi-media author, whose life, or image, is his real work, with the books he writes being mere incidents in the larger celebrity drama that has first call on his creative energy. Mailer, of course, is the prime example of this phenomenon, but there are others—and they are not all named Jacqueline Susann. Buckminster Fuller is such a figure and so, too, were Timothy Leary, Father Daniel Berrigan and Daniel Ellsberg in recent years. But McLuhan was the first of these modern philosopher kings, orchestrating (or having orchestrated for him) the mixed-media barrage which established him as a household name—in certain households anyway.

Now, Tom Wolfe may have missed the

distasteful implications of the Gossage-Feigan patronage of McLuhan, but it is greatly to his credit that throughout his pioneering piece he treated McLuhan as an unprecedented phenomenon in our culture and it is discouraging that no one else really followed his lead. It is perhaps a measure of his own canniness that McLuhan, throughout the great debate on his work, so successfully restructured arguments to his own chosen grounds, that no one—until, as we shall shortly see, it was too late—challenged either the historical or "scientific" data on which his assumptions rested or the absurd contention that he was conducting a value-free "probe" of the media and their effect on us.

As you will remember there was plenty of moral indignation of the kind I've already quoted and there is no need, I think, to add more of these splutters here. Consider instead the spectacle of good minds falling down dead in front of McLuhan. For example, George P. Elliott, the novelist, noting a ridiculous misinterpretation of *Troilus and Cressida*, was nevertheless extremely gingerly in his handling of McLuhan generally: "It is not possible to give a rational summary of McLuhan's ideas . . . the attitude and tone of his writing are at least as important as the ideas themselves, and to systematize these ideas, even in outline, would be to falsify their nature and impact." Maybe so. But what the hell, why not give it a try, despite the inevitable scoff from McLuhan that "you are a print-formed mind who has been made obsolete by Hume and electricity." It is always possible that he could have been brought down by a really vigorous scholarly assault.

Frank Kermode did a little better. He saw that, among other things, McLuhan, the Catholic convert, was re-writing Biblical myth by substituting "the printing press for Genesis and the dissociation of sensibility for the fall," and he sensibly objected that contrary to McLuhan's interpretation of recent intellectual history, there is a social tradition defending the oral culture: "the very notion of 'prose style' implies a strong oral element, not only for example in Joyce, where it suits McLuhan's book, but also in Dr. Johnson. We typographic men have certainly paid our respects to oral culture." In other words, the apocalypse attributed to Gutenberg's invention may not have been so apocalyptic after all. Which means that the apocalypse resulting from an electronic restructuring of our sensoria might not turn out to be as apocalyptic as McLuhan claimed either. But even the sharp-minded Kermode backs away from this important insight. McLuhan, he lamely concluded, "offers a fresh and coherent account of

In this apocalyptic age, a pusillanimous correctness may be far more foolish than the wildest of insufficiently supported generalizations. While most scholars bury their heads in the private little sand plots they have marked out as their "field," McLuhan obstinately takes all knowledge for his province. Like the great writers that he admires—Rabelais, Cervantes, Pope, Joyce—he strives to be a man of "integral awareness." I expect to be equally inspired and infuriated by his next book.

—Neil Compton in
Commentary, Jan. 1965

A brilliant man, a man to whom friends and students owe incalculable debts, a man who has accurately perceived things the implications of which we shall be following up for decades—this man has not only taught us to say, but keeps putting us in the position where we must say, disregard content, the medium is being spoken through by bad spirits.

—Hugh Kenner
in *The National Review*, Nov. 29, 1966

the state of the modern mind in terms of a congenial myth. In a truly literate society his book would start a long debate."

But, of course, it did not. A. Alvarez, like most of the other critics, had a good time with the irony that McLuhan had to announce the end of print culture by using print to do so. So did Raymond Williams and all sorts of people. Experts in film, among them Dwight Macdonald, were pleased to point out concrete examples of movies that were quite "cool" in their effect, while experts in television weighed in with the observation that there were plenty of "hot," high definition TV shows that seemed to belie McLuhan's basic point about the medium. In due course, scholars began to scientifically test some of his notions. In 1970, for instance, Robert Lewis Shayon reported in *Saturday Review* on an experiment at the University of Pennsylvania which proved what should have been obvious, which is that content—a contemptuously dismissed non-factor in McLuhan's equations—had a significant effect on subjects' "involvement" with a work. Boring content decreased interest in the allegedly automatically involving TV medium while interesting content, not surprisingly, increased involvement in the supposedly "hot" (that is non-involving) movie medium. Indeed, the researchers discovered that on the whole the poor old, hot old movies involved their subjects far more consistently than TV did. Only a straw in the wind? Surely, but McLuhan's whole work was a house built of such straws, so he couldn't really complain.

Indeed, he is not much heard from anymore, for he and his sponsors, in their manipulations, forgot to take into account the most primitive of all media rules—the Milton Berle syndrome, which holds that overexposure kills, that it is impossible for anyone to supply enough fresh new material to hold the attention of the large audience—or, indeed, any audience—for more than a few seasons. Or, to put it more boldly, he who lives by publicity (which is finally what multi-media campaigns come to), dies by it, unless he rather carefully parcels out his appearances, in the manner of modern movie stars who do no more than one or two pictures a year.

There is, I think, a misfortune in all this, namely that the "long debate" Kermode called for never got underway. The whole thing simply petered out as the press turned to more up-to-date sensations. Indeed, if McLuhan's strategy had been

As intellectual endeavors, McLuhan's books merit nothing but highest praise . . . they invite participation in their processes of thought, initiating not only dialogues between the reader and the book but between one reader and another. They are among the richest books of our times . . . as they make invisible visible and the unconscious conscious. Like other great native thinkers, McLuhan embodies that peculiarly North American capacity to push ideas, often derived from others, beyond conventional bounds to the wildest conclusions—literally levels beyond other minds in the same field . . . in our post-Marxist, most-existentialist, post-Christian age, such exploratory thought is more valuable and necessary than another serving of time-worn ideas.

**—Richard Kostelanetz
in *The Commonwealth*,
Jan. 20, 1967**

merely a cynical one, one designed to promote himself into brief profitable notoriety, skim the cream off his celebrity and then subside whence he had come, in the academic backwaters, there to quietly enjoy his gains, it must be judged a success. For no one did successfully challenge him during his moment of ascendancy. The scientists lacked the literary references to mount a full-scale attack on him while the literary gentlemen lacked the requisite scientific background to make a confident assault on him. In short, he had rigged the game so that he always had an escape hatch—out the door marked "science" if the attack came from one direction, out the one labelled "literature" if it came from the other side of the intellectual community.

I think, however, that he was more serious figure than that, that the issues he raised, however crazily, are real issues and that we—that is, the entire intellectual community—ought to have pursued the matter further. Nothing so grand as an antithesis to McLuhan's thesis was required. Rather, the chord he set up reverberating needed simply to be resolved.

Indeed, someone did pursue the matter. That was Dr. Jonathan Miller, co-creator of the English satirical review, *Beyond the Fringe*, now a director of movies, TV and things in London, but before all that, an M.D., and thus well-enough versed in scientific method to challenge McLuhan's scientific as well as his literary-historical bases. Kermode invited him to contribute the volume on McLuhan for the Viking Press "Modern Masters" series and Miller responded with a critical essay in the grand manner, a brisk wind that, if it offered no alternatives to McLuhan, at least cleared the air of the accumulated pollution that had surrounded his name and work.

Miller did what McLuhan was doing his best to discourage. He went back to McLuhan's personal history and to his literary criticism, published in the 1930s and '40s, demonstrating that a quite coherent system of values had been shaped in those early years and that those values are alive and operative in the later, more famous works. Miller noted, first of all, that having been born and bred in the agricultural provinces of Western Canada, McLuhan must have acquired a near-instinctive taste for agrarian populism, which, of course, can be interpreted as a form of tribalism. The small farmer, one recalls, was cruelly exploited at the end of the last century

and the beginning of this one by "linear and sequential" types—those super-rationalists who control the banking system and who, in their day, controlled the rates set by that most linear transportation form, the railroads, whose rates drove many a yeoman from his land and many of the survivors into a congenial, decentralized form of socialism, the co-operative movement. As a student at Cambridge, McLuhan came under the influence of an extremely sophisticated agrarian, F.R. Leavis, with his powerful belief that life was much richer in a predominantly agricultural society, when "speech was a popularly cultivated art, [and] people talked (so making Shakespeare possible) instead of reading or listening to the wireless . . ." Here, one begins to see the beginnings of the line followed in *Understanding Media*.

So primitivism was a value. And so was Catholicism. Miller puts the matter in the kindest possible way, noting that McLuhan's global nervous system is analogous to the "Noosphere" of another media-celebrity thinker, Teilhard de Chardin. Miller observed that as Catholics both men "give enormous and understandable priority to the fundamental spiritual unity of man. Any institution, natural or artificial, which gives secular thought world-wide expression would seem, on first principles at least, to be a congenial circumstance within which to establish a consensus of piety, too." McLuhan, in Miller's view, becomes a belated counter-reformationist, mounting a crusade "on behalf of the lost consensus, seeking aids to its recovery in the very culture that usurped it."

I don't have space to summarize all of Miller's successful assaults on the "science" McLuhan used mostly to snow us, but to take just one example, he devastates the notion that the sense ratio—that is the importance that any individual or society assigns to the physical means by which it receives information—is in any way calculable, capable of being reduced to scientific quantification. One general point, however, is worth pondering—namely that McLuhan's stay at Cambridge coincided with that University's ascendancy in the sciences and Miller argues powerfully that McLuhan's insistence that he is just a scientist making "probes" is a response to that ascendancy, an attempt to disarm one group of potential opponents by turning their own weapons against them. Miller points out, however, that McLuhan misunderstood scientific method. He quotes Karl Popper, the distinguished historian of science: ". . . the belief that we can start with pure observations alone, without anything in the nature of a theory, is absurd . . . Observation is always selective. It needs a chosen object, a definite task,

. . . the knowledge explosion has blown out the walls between subjects . . . Many of the categorical walls between things are artifacts left over from the packaging days of print . . . The trends are all toward wholeness and convergence . . . McLuhan's relevance for education demands the work of teams of simultaneous translators and researchers who can both shape and substantiate the insights which are scattered through his work. McLuhan didn't invent electricity or put kids in front of TV sets; he is merely trying to describe what's happening out there so that it can be dealt with intelligently. When someone warns you of an oncoming truck, it's frightfully impolite to accuse him of driving the thing.

**—John M. Culkin, S.J.
in *Saturday Review*
March 18, 1967**

an interest, a point of view, a problem.

Since McLuhan is anything but ignorant and anything but stupid, we may suppose, I think, that his posture as a disinterested observer was, like his failure to acknowledge both his agrarian and religious biases, a matter of strategy rather than oversight. One does not want to seem paranoid about it, but after reading Miller I am prepared to think that we were dealing with an extraordinarily clever, extraordinarily duplicitous exercise in propaganda, a veritable Watergate of the mind, orchestrated by a highly visible hidden persuader, developing an anti-rational (and therefore anti-democratic) ideology, which at its simplest level constituted not merely an assault on bookish culture, but on all culture, not out of simple perversity but out of a profound and dangerous conservatism—a conservatism carefully structured to seem "groovy."

Looking back now, it seems to me none of us behaved very well in the face of the McLuhan phenomenon. The popular journalists, me among them, were entirely too uncritical in our attempts to convey the essence of what he was saying, too in thrall of its seeming novelty to catch its true reactionary drift. The literary and scholarly community, on the one hand, was either too outraged to be persuasively coherent in its criticisms or, on the other, too worried about being "with it" to uphold its best and strictest standards in this case. Finally, I am dismayed that when Miller finally undertook the job we all shirked, the careful, reasonable, point-by-point assault on McLuhan, no one paid him any serious heed, that his little book has sunk without a trace.

I am glad, of course, that McLuhan passed so quickly out of fashion, rendering Miller's work superfluous in the eyes of most critics and book review editors. But I wonder . . . Dangerous ideas that are not fully—and generally—discredited, have a way of reappearing in new finery, new guises. I have the feeling that we may yet have cause to refer to Dr. Miller's little book, that those of us in communications may want to carry it around with us, as the Vampire hunter keeps a supply of wolfsbane handy. For the wicked count still lives, sulking in his northern redoubt, still available for consultation with his always-anxious business and media friends, wounded perhaps, but still dangerous—particularly if the culture enters upon another anti-rational convulsion like that of the sixties.

Boosterism in Cleveland

BY TERENCE SHERIDAN

Cleveland, the nation's tenth largest city in the sixth largest state, hunches depressingly against Lake Erie, a dying town beside a dead lake. "The best location," chorus irrepressible Cleveland boosters, "in the nation." But the make-believe madrigalists live in places like rustic Hunting Valley, Gates Mills, Pepper Pike and the finer neighborhoods of Shaker Heights—clean, green places where an upward-mobility wife is considered at least as indispensable as a golf bag, polo pony or a high-powered hunting rifle, and where family shopping is done in air-conditioned cornucopias redeemably far from the flat-rolled steel town's stinkpots and those odious little greasypoos advertising "donuts and work gloves."

Draped south of the city, like a string of artificial pearls below an unwashed neck, are the humble suburbs—the promised land of the middle class. Some of them fled the city so fast—rushing past signs that say CLEVELAND—TRY IT YOU'LL LIKE IT and CLEVELAND—A GREAT PLACE TO BE—they are still suffering sociological bends. It was called Cleaveland after General Moses Cleaveland, an intrepid Connecticut surveyor who celebrated crossing the Pennsylvania-Ohio line in 1796 by throwing a party with watered whiskey. He later rowed down the Cuyahoga River (now a nationally known firetrap) to valiantly create Yankee civilization in a swamp. One hundred and seventy-seven years later Tom Vail, publisher and editor of *The Plain Dealer*, is still touting Cleveland as a great place to be. "Talk Cleveland Up" proposed a *PD* editorial last year. Inspired by a sermon from a Shaker Heights rector, a former business executive, the *PD* urged Clevelanders to heed the Episcopalian pastor's warning that "badmouthing is self-defeating while

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"The 132-year-old Plain Dealer has become little more than a showcase for publisher Tom Vail's ego and insecurities . . . In the last three years, the paper has had four managing editors and three city editors."

positive thinking offers bright promise for the future."

Boosterism, a painkiller prescribed by Cleveland leaders, is a mainstay at *The Plain Dealer*, Ohio's largest newspaper (409,281 daily, 514,756 on Sunday)—a morning newspaper pushing journalistic morphinism in spite of nay-saying badmouthers. Hyperbolic Thomas Van Husen Vail, of Hunting Valley, is the Ivy League (vintage '49) handsome son of Herman Lansing Vail, still a rockhard lawyer at the age of 78. Herman Vail is a director of the Island Creek Coal Co. and the Occidental Petroleum Corp., former president of the Forest City Publishing Co. (*The Plain Dealer*) and an honorary director of the Cleveland Trust Co., Ohio's largest bank.

In 1963, at the age of 36, Tom Vail was handed the *PD* and a blank check to make the good gray newspaper, then 40,000 subscribers behind the afternoon Scripps-Howard *Press*, number one in Ohio, the world's largest producer of hothouse tomatoes. The *PD* became number one in less than six years not by being a cheerleader but by attempting to reflect at least some harsh realities of the city and state. It was done by hiring young reporters, reporters capable of running roughshod over the opposition, and turning them loose. Vail extravagantly called them his "tigers," which so delighted *Time* that the magazine in 1965 wrote about it in its *Press* section. Vail mistakenly thought he alone was responsible for the sudden

surge in subscriptions and thus, slowly, began the paper's decline editorially—a decline in inverse proportion to the emergence of the publisher's ego. As Vail saw it, the *PD* should be a mouthpiece for his aspirations: A Pulitzer Prize (somehow to be won without offending his Union Club friends), a U.S. Senate seat, frequent pictures in the *PD* of him and wife Iris (the former Iris Jennings of the New York Jennings, early stockholders in Standard Oil) and a parking garage on his own street.

The Pulitzer has proved elusive and the Senate seat was, after all, merely an illusion of grandeur that even father Herman could not make real. But the pictures were no problem, and a compliant City Council gave him a block of a city street for a garage in which to park his green Jaguar sports car. The garage is a large concrete bunker on Rockwell Avenue, a section of his very own street behind the *Plain Dealer* building, which is guarded by blue-shirted private policemen carrying Mace 100 yards west of a Chinese neighborhood. The Chinese, who have three restaurants and a couple of wholesale stores on Rockwell, were unhappy about Vail expropriating a block of the street, but the Chinese don't have a lot of votes in Cleveland.

The grandson of Windsor White, founder of White Motor Co., and the great-grandson of Thomas White, founder of White Sewing Machine Co., Vail was a political science student at Princeton, graduating *cum laude* in 1949. Since then he has become an ardent social scientist and an authority on national security, privy to inside information that he unhesitatingly shares with readers of his Sunday column in the *Plain Dealer*. In June, 1972, for instance, Vail informed us that he had access to the White House-Kremlin "hotline," which no doubt comforted Clevelanders fearing a surprise nuke attack in the event that something went wrong with the cable. "It was an interesting call and a good connection," he wrote. "It's nice to know the 'hotline' works so well. I don't know the charges as they were not reversed." For "obvious reasons" he couldn't tell us whom he talked to (it was an "off the record" call) but he did say he was "impressed that the voices sounded like they were coming from the next room. Returning the call, our operator in Cleveland connected me with the White House and from there the hotline in Moscow."

This summer he had another surprise for us. "This week," he said on June 17, "I'm off to London, Paris, Brussels Bonn and Geneva." Those of us concerned for the safety of the publisher in faraway Western Europe were reassured by a page one story, the same day, announcing: "Thomas Vail, publisher and editor of *The Plain Dealer*, arrived last night in London on the first leg of a



five-nation trip to meet with heads of government. Vail seeks from them first-hand knowledge of the political climate in Europe as it relates to the United States, with particular emphasis on economics." There was no mistaking that it was our Tom. There was a picture of him with the column, another with the arrival announcement and a third, with a front-page blurb, directed our attention to the other two.

In a dispatch from London on June 22, the publisher wrote: "When you talk to enough people there develops either a blur or a pattern." In his case it was a definite pattern: "The pattern is Britain on the upswing, and never mind past glories and empires." An encouraging note, we felt, for dejected Britons not members of touring rock bands and fretting about lost empires. On June 24, he wrote possibly his best column of the trip. "If you did not see the play *My Fair Lady*," he began, "you should try out Royal Ascot. Why not?"

"To carry all this off," he instructed the *PD* subscriber in Hough who was probably bad-mouthing the hot summer (the homicide season in Cleveland) "you might throw in a rented Rolls-Royce and driver and take a picnic to have on the lawn outside the race course before the race." Although impressed by the entrance of the royal party, led by Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, Vail pondered Cleveland: "While I was thinking what a great entrance this would be for someone like Mayor and Mrs. Perk" (here it obviously slipped his mind that the first lady of Cleveland once turned down a dinner invitation to the White House because it conflicted with her bowling night) "it suddenly occurred to me that there was, besides the gray toppers, the ladies and their hats, the Queen and her consort (husband to you), also a horse race to be held this afternoon."

In a message from Paris on June 26, the publisher, speaking directly to the Cleveland housewife complaining about high prices in grocery stores, tartly remarked: "If you think prices in the United States are high, a trip to Paris will stop your complaints." Then it was on to Belgium, West Germany and Switzerland for insights equally perceptive as those from England and France.

Vail's timing for the trip was perfect. Had he stayed in Cleveland he would have been forced to take out peace bonds on rebellious journalists. Shortly after he departed on his five-nation fact-finding mission, a group of insurgent reporters met secretly on a plan to poison the minds of budding journalists, eight summer interns working at the *PD*. In honor of assistant editor Lew Edwards (in charge of "quality control" and chief recruiter of talent), the cabal was tentatively called "The First Annual *Plain Dealer* Unit, Cleveland Newspaper Guild, Lewis B. Edwards Memorial Intern Counter-Indoctrination and Cotillion," to be held in a bar on Payne Avenue, Cleveland's Cannery Row.

Increasingly, young reporters at the *Plain Dealer* have been meeting at bars, getting caught in flash drunks and badmouthing the paper. "I'd love to get a job with *The Washington Post* just so I could give those pricks a two-word resignation," said one. Another, a recipient of a recent Guild award for outstanding journalism, said, "I was talking to an editor at the *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times* and the guy says to me: 'What the hell is going on at the *Plain Dealer*? I have a stack of applications on my desk from there!'"

What is going on is that the 132-year-old *Plain Dealer* has become little more than a showcase for Vail's ego and insecurities—the latter caused by purchase of the paper in 1967 by Samuel I. Newhouse for a reported \$55 million. Reluctant to tamper with local management, or alienate affluent advertisers in a clubby town, Newhouse

paid Vail \$100,000 a year to maintain the feckless status quo. In recent months, six journeyman reporters have resigned and a managing editor and city editor were fired. In the last three years, the paper has had four managing editors and three city editors. Last April, *Time* returned for another look at the *PD*: "Taming the Tigers." The young tigers, Vail told *Time*, were "a wild lot." The *PD*, he said, was "shifting gears"—hiring reporters with "track records of seven, eight, nine years experience." The Guild, which could not help noticing that the paper had 41 reporters, 11 less than seven years ago, asked the publisher where he was keeping the stars with the track records. "I was totally misquoted," Vail said. Executive editor Thomas Guthrie told *Time* the tigers "had no loyalty" and "their grammar was atrocious." Scotsman Guthrie said that he reads London papers for "decent English."

Again, an astonishing revelation inasmuch as Guthrie's reputation at the *PD* does not rest solidly on ability as either a grammarian or as a prose stylist. The 61-year-old executive editor, a former public information officer for the Royal Air Force, rushed to the City Room bulletin board with a memo disclaiming the *Time* quotes. *Time* saw it as a grievous problem of generation gapping. More accurately it was and is a problem of expediency and ankle grasping.

At the *PD* the old fall as fast as the young when they run afoul of ex-Wing Commander Guthrie, a *PD* employee since 1948 and a United States citizen since 1954. When told in 1971 that Guthrie, Tom Vail's social chairman in Cleveland and Washington, was going to be the next executive editor, managing editor Ted Princiotto, a *PD* newsman for 31 years, resigned in sorrow and anger. Another managing editor, Wilson Hirschfeld, fell from unstable grace last March, fired after 37 years with the paper. (He thought he was on a three-month leave of absence until he read in *Time* that he had been fired.) A month to the day after Hirschfeld was told to go away for a long time, 33-year-old Michael Roberts, the city editor, was fired. A prize-winning reporter and the paper's Vietnam war correspondent, Roberts was supposed to be the bring-us-together man in the city room, implicitly trusted because he wore narrow ties, button-down shirts and wing tip shoes. Roberts, a *PD* reporter for eight years and city editor for 18 months, had lost editorial face-offs to Commander Guthrie. "When Guthrie talks about loyalty, he means loyalty to Guthrie, not to journalism," Roberts says. "The place got so paralyzed you couldn't have a conversation for fear it would be branded as disloyalty."

Roberts is now managing editor of *Cleveland* magazine. A month after he left, journeyman Edward Whelan turned down a job offer in the *PD*'s Washington bureau to join the monthly magazine. Meanwhile Commander Guthrie, PR man for the RAF and once a fairly literate copy editor for the *PD*, is whipping the newspaper into shape. When Guild pickets gathered in front of the newspaper the first day of a three-day strike last October, Guthrie paused during a meal at the Cleveland Athletic Club to phone managing editor Hirschfeld, ordering him to call the cops. Hirschfeld, a close friend of Republican Mayor Ralph Perk, obeyed zealously and soon afterwards the mounties arrived—six cops on horses, accompanied by 30 cops with clubs. They went through the reporters as if they weren't there, although one of the horsemen did hesitate long enough to suggest to a female reporter that she "eat" a stallion's droppings. Ironically, the three-day strike last fall had more impact on the city than did a 129-day strike in 1962-3, for last fall television viewers in a union town saw 7,200 pounds of horseflesh pressing people against the

windowless walls of their morning newspaper. Sensing a good issue in an election year, the Democratic City Council pounced on it, publicly deploring the use of police horses as a strike-breaking measure. Hirschfeld (called "Mad Dog" by reporters) was an expendable casualty—so inexperienced in how real office politics work that he didn't know that every private memo a secretary typed for him had a carbon copy that went directly to Guthrie.

Last December, reporter Susan Stranahan, Mercer County (Pa.) Girl of the Year in 1964 and daughter of a Pennsylvania state judge, resigned to take a job with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Guthrie, feeling Stranahan's career was in a tailspin, summoned her to his office for a chat. "We talked at length but I don't think we were communicating," Stranahan says. "But it was fun finding out where the office was. It takes a long time now to get to the executive editor's office. You have to go through a series of locked doors, but I finally got to see the man himself. When I got the nerve up, I pointed out the reason for my leaving was the prior departure of various reporters whom I respected and wanted to learn from." When Stranahan talked of emulating *PD* reporters, she was speaking of the tigers now gone—Roberts, Don Barlett, Jim Naughton and Joe Eszterhas, representing different talents and styles, but unquestionably the best in the zoo.

Barlett, a former special agent with the U.S. Army's Counter Intelligence Corps, was the complete investigative reporter, taking so long to do a story that he nearly forgot how to type. But when he finished the articles, as many as he could get in the paper, they were definitive. In 1965 he got a job as an employee at the Lima State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, surfacing weeks later with an incredible series of documented horror stories. Barlett caused all sorts of problems for timid *PD* editors. In 1969 they were hectoring by phone calls from as far away as Washington after he completed a study of the oil depletion allowance, a series of stories that included an unflattering account of then Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans. Prominent Cleveland lawyers, friends of Vail, convinced editors that Barlett's facts were wrong, and the reporter was gently ordered to turn his attention elsewhere.

But Barlett had been through that program before. Back in 1965 he thought that brilliant lawyer Abe Fortas, nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court and advisor to Lyndon B. Johnson, warranted attention. Commander Guthrie, then *PD* bureau chief in Washington, thought not and on Aug. 9, 1965, he wrote: "I doubt that what could be picked up would be worth the time and money spent on it." Executive Editor Philip Porter, the man responsible for importing Guthrie from Scotland to Cleveland, agreed and on Aug. 10, 1965, Porter wrote: "Let's tell Don to forget the investigation of Abe Fortas. While I think there is something in his past that would make a good story, my feeling is that we're not going to prevent his confirmation by the Senate and I agree with Guthrie that it probably wouldn't be worth the time and money." On May 15, 1969, Fortas became the first justice in the history of the high court to resign under pressure, admitting that three months after he was appointed he had entered into a \$20,000 agreement for "continuing services" with the family foundation of financier Louis B. Warren, who in 1969 was serving a one-year prison term for securities fraud. *Life* broke that story.

Yet publisher Vail, in speech after speech and column after column, professed a passionate concern for the commonweal through in-depth reporting. Barlett, asked for his opinion of a proposed *PD* investigative team, in 1969 wrote: "I believe the term 'investigative' should be broadened to include general in-depth articles based on a new concept. This would involve applying investigative techniques to articles such as the cover stories in *Time* and *Newsweek*, the leaders in the *Wall Street Journal* and the insight pieces in the *Chicago Daily News* and *London Sunday Times*. The finished product, I believe, would be a little different and a little better than the above-mentioned examples.

"These articles would be of a local nature and I think the range of subjects is limitless. A few ideas that come to mind quickly are a detailed profile of a single slum block; zoning in the suburbs; a study of suicides (now ranked fourth among the causes of death), and a survey of various state and federal laws to determine their over-all effectiveness—laws relating to such areas as divorce, child support, inter-state gambling, prostitution, etc."

But the team concept was shelved. It was too expensive, and, besides, it would disturb too many important people. Barlett left the *PD* in 1970. Last year he and *Philadelphia Inquirer* coworker James Steele shared a George Polk Memorial Award for a series on housing frauds that disturbed realtors.

Naughton was the *PD*'s politics writer—fast, industrious, lucid and accurate. *PD* subscribers can still read Naughton, now a member of *The New York Times* Washington bureau, since the *PD* buys the *Times* news service. In July, 1968, Naughton and two other *PD* reporters worked on a long piece that probed a Glenville ghetto gunfight in which four black men and three white policemen were killed. The article concluded that the police, who flatly called it an "ambush," might be wrong. The article was rejected even though the reporters threatened to resign. *The New York Times* subsequently did a long piece on the shoot-out, concluding that it seemed to be a case of "spontaneous combustion"—a conclusion amply supported by later studies.

Eszterhas, one of the reporters who did not resign on principle in 1968, was fired for "disloyalty" in 1971. The *PD*'s youth cult expert and polished feature writer, Eszterhas was the paper's favorite son, the youngest tiger. He smiled on Vail and Vail smiled on him—and success smiled on both of them for four and a half years. Then in 1971 Eszterhas, in the October issue of *Evergreen Review*, wrote a 12-page freelance piece. "The Selling of the Mylai Massacre." He viewed it as exultant confession, the paper as wicked disloyalty. In the richly detailed article Eszterhas told how he auctioned off the Mylai atrocity pictures (which had run exclusively in the *PD* in 1969) in a New York hotel, the Gotham, finally accepting \$20,000 from *Life* for himself and former Army photographer Ron Haerberle when it became sadly clear that their goal of \$120,000 was out of reach. Newspapers had begun pirating the copyrighted photos, causing the bidding to drop off dramatically. The *PD*, which a couple of days later gave Eszterhas and Haerberle each a \$500 "bonus" for exclusive use of the photos, sanctified the auction, giving Eszterhas time off to sell the massacre and recommending competent counsel should he need a lawyer.

Such a bidding hustle, with the Cleveland kid pitting in the eyes of his elders and saying *more, more*, was, as far as *PD* editors were concerned, perfectly all right as long as it was done privately in a Manhattan hotel and Vail's name wasn't mentioned. But Eszterhas, a Hungarian refugee who was born on a pile of sour straw in

war-shattered Szombathely in 1944, a failed high school disc jockey turned writer, saw laughter on the dark side of the American Dream. He saw the vainglorious squire of Hunting Valley as a "peripatetic, periscopic guy. *Newsweek* once said he looked more like F. Scott Fitzgerald than a publisher. His use of 'terrific' has gained national attention. He endorsed Richard Nixon, albeit reluctantly and enthusiastically endorsed the Nixon kitchen: 'The food is super and under President Nixon we are back to the best French wines!'"

In a trice, Eszterhas was disloyal, as well as a consistently "inaccurate" reporter and a thief. The *PD* accused him of stealing \$50 from a widow. A *PD* reader had sent the reporter a \$50 check, in his name, but to be forwarded to the widow of one of the 44 victims killed when the Silver Bridge over the Ohio River collapsed in 1967. Eszterhas said he cashed the check and sent the money to the widow, who lived in Point Pleasant, West Virginia. The *PD* claimed he did not. Furthermore, retired and current editors had pooled their research sources and had reliable information that Eszterhas (they had been warned before the *PD* hired him that he would be "either a Hemingway or a headache") had been seen during his student days at Ohio University stone drunk at high noon on the main street of Athens, Ohio.

And there was one other reason for the paper's uncommon rancor, perhaps insignificant to the average, rational reader of newspapers, but turncoat clear to *PD* editors: Eszterhas's compressed description in *Evergreen* of how the *PD* had its exploitive "exclusive" scooped in 1965 when the *Press* ecstatically ran a page-one ocean interview with the late Robert Manry, the *PD* copy reader who made a 78-day transatlantic voyage, Falmouth to Falmouth, in a 13-foot sailboat. Plagued by seasickness and tied down with babysitting chores with Manry's two kids, two middle-aged *PD* reporters and a photographer were on shore when Bill Jorgensen, then a TV newsman in Cleveland, hired a trawler and found Manry, who later declined (surprised that even the *PD* would ask him to do such an asinine thing) to wear a special *Plain Dealer* sweatshirt for "photo opportunities." Jorgensen first offered his interview to the *PD* for in-depth treatment, but the paper disdainfully rejected it as untrustworthy, only to regret it later.

This all came out during a six-day Guild hearing that ended last March with the arbitrator,

Mailer...

(continued from page 1)
"fed on sexual candy").

There are deft turns of phrase, such as "the inside of her heart must have looked like a club-fighter's face;" "with a senile judge and an out-of-phase moon, Twentieth could even lose the case;" and—on Monroe's breakup with Arthur Miller—"the shattering of the Hourglass and the Egghead." There are wonderously baroque sentences like: "But unless her [Marilyn's] sexuality has divided into twin compartments, Christian Science to one side and the other lobe of her mind capable of playing the totally ambitious girl who will never vomit over what she has to put in her mouth since she is in fact excited by the sexual pursuit of her ambition—all of which assumes some striking sexual metamorphoses to have accompanied her new blonde hair and her name—the likelihood is that [Joe] Schenck [co-founder of Twentieth Century-Fox] and Monroe had, or at least also had, some kind of genuine friendship; if there was sex, it was not necessarily the first of the qualities he found in her."

And, of course, there is sexual imagery, as when Mailer speculates on Darryl Zanuck's

Cleveland lawyer Calvin McCoy, upholding the firing of Eszterhas but rejecting the *PD*'s attempt to deny the reporter dismissal pay on the grounds that he stole the \$50 check. "Much more than inference is required to sustain a charge of dishonesty," the arbitrator ruled. And he cheerfully added that if he were a publisher he would want to hire Eszterhas, currently an associate editor of *Rolling Stone*. "With his several faults, he is one of a special breed of reporters that adds to the zest of reporting," McCoy wrote, an unusual digression in the 28-page opinion that may have been prompted inadvertently by Vail himself, who had sent many congratulatory memos to the disloyal and inaccurate employee. The memos, Guild exhibits at the hearing, categorically praised Eszterhas' work as "superb," "excellent," "well balanced," "distinguished," "well written" and "of the highest order."

That was the old Tom Vail, the publisher who left his Hunting Valley estate in high spirits every morning to urge on the tigers, reminding them in the company house organ, *The Forest City Log*, that the world was watching the *PD*. "Our efforts are the talk of the town and the talk of the country," he wrote in 1965. But that was before he and his editors were up against the wall, forced there by the last five years of the tumultuous 'sixties: weird drugs and rock music, black panthers and white cops, a painfully protracted war and long-haired radicals. Annoyed by the upheaval, they insisted on stories that emphasized the positive. So when Stranahan wrote a feature about a smart chicken, a leghorn that laid eggs on a specially-built shelf at the Cleveland Zoo, she quickly received a warm note from executive editor William Ware. "Beautifully done, the sort of thing we need more of here," wrote Ware, the man who proceeded Guthrie and who once decreed that *PD* reporters could not call Negroes "blacks." From praise pieces about such things as an over-achieving chicken, it was an effortless free-fall to the *PD* of today, a paper with news columns filled with news service copy, sublime boosterism and potent promotion of a cash-prize word puzzle, Dolly's Cashword, to compete with the *Press*' popular money puzzle, *Crafty Cutey*.

reasons for initially holding back Marilyn's career. "Darryl Zanuck liked to put his own meat into a star's meat so that the product was truly stamped Twentieth Century-Fox. In his eyes she [Marilyn] had to be Schenck's meat and her [agent Johnny] Hyde's potatoes. No glory to his own sausage."

Still overcompensating for the indignity of having to use "fug" in *The Naked and the Dead*, Mailer misses no opportunity to be more explicit. From Zolotow and Guiles he gets an anecdote about Marilyn imperiously keeping everyone waiting on a movie set. An assistant director is sent to her dressing room to fetch her. "Drop dead," she replies, according to Zolotow. "Go screw!" according to Guiles. "Go fuck yourself," according to Mailer.

Mailer covers himself at the outset by warning readers that he is attempting a novel of Marilyn Monroe "written in the form of biography... No items could be made up and evidence would be provided when facts were moot. Speculation *had* to be underlined... At the end, if successful, he would have offered a literary hypothesis of a possible Marilyn Monroe who might actually have lived and fit most of the facts



available."

Mailer retells some of the available facts with characteristic psycho-razzmatazz. Take the time little Norma Jean was playing with her foster brother. "She and Lester shed their clothes in the front yard, surprised to find a difference between themselves. Norma Jean was shouted at while Lester escaped punishment." That's Guiles' version. Here's Mailer's: "Both could undress (at least once) in the front yard to examine each other, but Norma Jean was the one who would catch the blame—it is part of the scenario of dread in the mind of the Silent Majority that a boy's penis is, on occasion, exhibitable, but murder draws a rifle sight on open vagina."

When Marilyn Monroe's studio learns that she has posed for nude calendars, a studio executive confronts her in her dressing room. Says Zolotow: "He was wringing his hands, and moaning, over and over again, how could she do such a terrible thing? Didn't she know how offensive it was to public morality? This could ruin her entire career in pictures if it came out. She could be blackballed by every studio. 'There's only one thing to do,' he said, finally. 'Deny it—deny everything. You didn't pose for the picture. It's just a case of mistaken identity!'"

And now Mailer: "Now when Twentieth learns from her lips that she has, yes, posed in the nude, a novelist has a right to invent the following dialogue. 'Did you spread your legs?' asks a studio executive.

"'No.'

"'Is your asshole showing?'

"'Certainly not.'

"'Any animals in it with you?'

"'I'm alone. It's just a nude.'

"'You are going to deny you ever took those pictures. Some other blonde did the job. Somebody who has the misfortune to look like you.'"

When Mailer is playing it straight, which is most of the time, many of his anecdotes read very much like Zolotow's and Guiles', only punchier. A case in point is Marilyn Monroe's relations with her future mother-in-law, Arthur Miller's mother. "She opened her whole heart to me," Mrs. Miller says. Marilyn said she wanted to become part of the Miller family. She asked Mrs. Miller to teach her the fine points of preparing cold borscht, gefulte fish, chopped liver, potato pirogen, chicken soup with matzoh balls, and other Jewish delicacies." That's Zolotow's version. Here's Mailer's "She opened her whole heart to me," said Mrs. Miller, who then told how Marilyn was learning to make gefulte fish, borscht, chicken soup with matzoh

balls, chopped liver, tsimis, potato pirogen..."

Aha! An open-and-shut case of lifting lines and then trying to conceal it by shifting a few words around. Or is it? Zolotow doesn't indicate where he got his information on the two women. Mailer specifies his is from a *New York Post* interview with Arthur Miller's mother. But how could Mailer have found time to look up old newspaper stories? Presumably he relied on a secondary source. No matter. Facts are not copyrightable. Nor are statements made at a press conference or other public gathering. Statements gathered in an exclusive interview are copyrightable. But the courts in recent years have liberally interpreted the law to allow biographers generous use of material from previous biographies and other sources. Copyright lawyers call this liberal judicial interpretation the "doctrine of fair use." Whether Mailer goes beyond fair use is something else.

Also in contention is just how heavily Mailer borrowed from Guiles and Zolotow. Guiles' British publisher says Mailer used 255 passages from Guiles' book. Zolotow estimates that "about a quarter of Mailer's book is made up of either direct big hunks of my book—approximately 15,000 words—which he acknowledges I wrote, or other big chunks taken out without attribution, plus paraphrasing of other ideas and concepts in my book, or literal phrases which he just changes around." Grosset & Dunlap contends that Mailer used only and exactly 2,473 words from Guiles and 2,894 words from Zolotow. To allow leeway, the publisher added on 20 per cent, upping the Zolotow count, for instance, to 3,500, when it applied for permission to reprint. Following book industry practice, the reprint requests were sent to the publishers—to McGraw-Hill for Guiles and to Harcourt Brace Jovanovich for Zolotow.

When publishers receive a request for permission to excerpt a few hundred words, they routinely grant it, typically setting four cents a word as the reprint fee. Because the chunks for the Mailer book were unusually large, however, each publisher thought it better to pass along the request to the author. Both authors assented. For Zolotow, whose *Marilyn Monroe* has been selling less than 100 copies a year, it seemed like found money. Grosset & Dunlap says it paid \$950 for Zolotow's permission. Zolotow's publisher took 50 per cent of his \$950, the standard split, and then his agent presumably skimmed 10 per cent off the

remaining \$475. No wonder Zolotow is gnashing his teeth over Mailer pocketing a \$50,000 advance for a hurry-up job so heavily dependent on his lengthy labors.

And \$50,000 is only the beginning. Mailer also gets roughly one-third of the royalties (the photographers get the rest). No author needs an agent to calculate that even a one-third slice of the royalties on a \$19.95 book destined to become a bestseller is enough to keep any writer in Scotch and typewriter ribbons forever. Grosset & Dunlap's Bob Markel says 285,000 copies, including those for the Book-of-the-Month, Playboy and Book Find clubs, are already in print and bookstores report *Marilyn* is "selling like crazy." What with royalties plus foreign, book club, serialization, syndication and other subsidiary rights, Mailer and the photographers in the end will share several hundred thousand dollars.

In a sense, Mailer asked for trouble by so openly acknowledging dependence on the earlier biographies. In his back-of-the-book acknowledgment, Mailer states that the facts of his book "have been based in the main" on Guiles' book. "Obviously, one must think Guiles is accurate for the most part (a few small errors have been discovered), but indeed one has to hope so—our own chronology rests on his. Acknowledgment of a greater order is, however, certainly due. For one could never have undertaken this biography if *Norma Jean* did not exist..."

Mailer is less kind to Zolotow, contending in the book's opening that Zolotow's "material is reamed with overstressed and hollow anecdotes untrustworthy by the very style of their prose, a feature writer heating up the old dishes of other feature writers, and so a book which has fewer facts than factoids (to join the hungry ranks of those who coin a word), that is, facts which have no existence before appearing in a magazine or newspaper, creations which are not so much lies as a product to manipulate emotion in the Silent Majority." Such a factoid, he claims, is the fable that as a girl Marilyn was raped in a foster home by a boarder. Monroe herself was the source of many such sympathy-seeking gossip column items.

Zolotow has good reason to be resentful. If he is such an unreliable biographer, why did Mailer rely so heavily on him? "Mailer steals my research and then he accuses me of not doing research," Zolotow complains. Zolotow says the interviewed 100 persons for his book, whereas Mailer mentions talking to only a dozen for his. Interestingly, one of

Zolotow's interviews was with Norman Mailer himself. The time was 1959, shortly after Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* was published. Having admired *The Naked and the Dead* and *Deer Park*, Zolotow read *Advertisements for Myself*, and in it he found a reprint of an interview that Mailer had given Lyle Stuart's *Expose* (later renamed *The Independent*). One of the passages in the interview goes:

"Q. How do you feel about Marilyn Monroe?

"A. She must be very brave because she has come such a long way. She is one of the few actresses I still have some real curiosity about."

Zolotow says he assumed that Mailer knew Monroe. When Zolotow came east to research his book, he phoned Mailer and invited him to lunch at the Algonquin Hotel. Zolotow was disappointed to learn Mailer had never met Monroe, but the two writers enjoyed speculating about the sex symbol's sex life. Zolotow recalls, "Mailer wondered whether she was a good lay and said he would like to have an affair with her. He asked me if I had. I said no."

Zolotow alludes to both the *Expose* interview and the Algonquin lunch on page 329 of his *Marilyn Monroe*: "Norman Mailer has said that Monroe is one of the few actresses 'I still have some real curiosity about.' Unlike [James T.] Farrell, Mailer did not regard Monroe's marriage [to Arthur Miller] as a fine thing. He found it disturbing. He did not think Monroe should be married to anybody. She belonged to all men."

In *Marilyn*, Mailer makes clear he really thinks Marilyn belonged to him. "The secret ambition, after all, had been to steal Marilyn [from Miller]; in all his [Mailer's] vanity he thought no one was so well suited to bring out the best in her as himself . . ." Mailer recalls that in the late 1940s in Brooklyn, "he had lived in the same brownstone house in which Arthur Miller was working on *Death of a Salesman* and this at just the time he was himself doing *The Naked and the Dead*. The authors, meeting occasionally on the stairs, or at the mail box in the hall, would chat with diffidence as they looked for a bit of politics or literary business to mouth upon—each certainly convinced on parting that the other's modest personality would never amount to much. In later years, when Miller was married to Monroe, the playwright and the movie star lived in a farmhouse in Connecticut not five miles away from the younger author, who, not yet aware of what his final relation to Marilyn Monroe would be, waited for the call to visit, which of course never came."

Mailer is more than jealous of Miller; he is downright bitchy. "Miller had only a workmanlike style, limited lyrical gifts, no capacity for intellectual shock, and only one major play to his credit" (*Death of a Salesman*) when he met Monroe. Worse, Miller's verbal ideas were banal," he was "famous" for "stinginess," and he was "ambitious, limited and small-minded." To add injury to insult, Mailer excerpts seven passages totaling 51 lines from Miller's semi-autobiographical play, *After the Fall*, with no indication on the copyright page that he obtained permission to do so from Miller or Viking Press.

Certainly, if Mailer is a plagiarist, he is a peculiar sort of one, making no effort to hide his footprints and going out of his way to scatter his calling card. He mentions Zolotow by name no fewer than 32 times in *Marilyn* and Guiles 31 times. Most of the mentions precede passages taken from their books and set off from the main body of Mailer's text by smaller, indented type. On the other hand, Mailer fails to give specific credit for at least four extensive excerpts that are verbatim from Zolotow and at least six verbatim from Guiles. When Mailer retells anecdotes and short dialogue, he rarely cites his source, so it's difficult to know whether he is rewriting Zolotow, Guiles or someone else. Not even Mailer himself probably

knows whether he used 55 or 255 passages from Guiles. Zolotow's estimate that Mailer directly took 15,000 words from him is certainly way too high. Excerpts Mailer credits to Zolotow total considerably less than the 3,500 words he had permission to use. Again, Mailer himself probably doesn't know how many Zolotow words he rewrote and used without credit.

Zolotow's charge that Mailer stole his ideas and concepts as well as words is even shakier. How can any writer claim exclusivity for ideas and concepts about the most talked-about, most written-about actress of her day? Moreover, ideas and concepts—like facts and public statements—are not copyrightable. Besides, Mailer has an ample fund of his own ideas and concepts—plus wild speculation. His wildest speculation is on how Monroe died. The generally accepted version, that she deliberately took an overdose of barbituates, is too mundane for the novelist-turned-biographer. Among conflicting versions, he favors murder by FBI or CIA rightwingers bent on getting at her close, if platonic, friend, Bobby Kennedy, and his brother John. This theory depends on accepting an account of her last night that is disputed by the only person with her at the time, her housekeeper Eunice Murray. Mailer did not interview Mrs. Murray. "I hate telephone interviews" and "I had something like 20,000 words to finish in the last week," he explained to Mike Wallace on a CBS "60 Minutes" segment entitled, "Mailer, Monroe and the Fast Buck." But Wallace interviewed Mrs. Murray and she denied murder was possible. "I was alone there with her, the doors were locked, we had gone to bed, and no one was around." That leaves Mailer pushing an uglier factoid than any he accuses Zolotow of.

As *Marilyn*'s August 1 publication date approached and critics itched to have at Mailer, too, Maurice Zolotow was laying plans for two suits. One would charge Mailer with copyright infringement, the other with libel. "He made a quite damaging attack on me, calling me a liar, in effect," Zolotow explains. Zolotow's fear is that readers will accept Mailer's putdown of his research as unoriginal and untrustworthy and forego buying his forthcoming biography of John Wayne, *Shooting Star*. Not to be outdone in this ego-cum-publicity battle, Mailer announced at a press conference in New York July 18 that unless Zolotow apologized for charging plagiarism he would sue for libel. (The dispute is all in the family since both men are represented by agent Scott Meredith.)

Legal experts think Zolotow will have a difficult time proving either libel or copyright infringement. Eventually he may settle out of court, as Guiles finally did last month. Franklin Weissberg, Guiles' lawyer-agent, says Guiles gets a lot more under the settlement than the \$1,500 payment just negotiated by Grosset & Dunlap, but Weissberg won't say how much more.

Considering the bonanzas Grosset and Mailer will reap from *Marilyn*, both should find it in their hearts and wallets to sweeten Zolotow's sliver of the pie. But then how much generosity can be expected of a run-for-profit publisher owned by soulless conglomerate National General Corp.? Or of a high-living author who reportedly needs \$200,000 a year before taxes to support his habits, two homes and seven children by five wives? In *The Armies of the Night* Mailer described his beliefs as a "mixture of Marxism, conservatism, nihilism, and large parts of existentialism." Exploitative capitalism belongs there too. However one may admire Mailer's quickie tour de force, one has to wish his tenets were up to his talents.

(HELLBOX)

(continued from page 2)

Within a few days, the AP had put the figure at nearly \$110,000, but Blackburn was quietly conducting an investigation which was to raise the ante much higher. By contacting construction firms throughout the area, he obtained specific details of contracts for work done on the San Clemente property and confronted the General Services Administration with a detailed list of projects totaling \$414,093. GSA quickly admitted to \$456,352, but Blackburn came back a few days later with informants willing to attest to further expenditures. On June 22, the GSA put the Federal role at \$703,367 since July, 1969 (it has since gone still higher), and it tossed in a bit of a bonus: the first detailed list of \$1.18 million of federally-financed improvements at the President's Key Biscayne home.

The *Register*, with its strong conservative bent and with no editorial staff outside of Orange County, would seem an unlikely sponsor for 38-year-old Blackburn's investigative enterprise, but it was not the first time that it had bucked southern California Republicanism. Before the San Clemente story, it had let Blackburn dig into the relationships between members of the all-GOP, all-millionaire Lincoln Club of Orange County and the local candidates they liked to think they owned. After the San Clemente story had been repeatedly denied, the *Register* resisted pressure from readers to apologize to Nixon. Wrote Executive Editor Jim Dean: "If the *Register* owes an apology, it is to our readers for our inability to clear up the matter once and for all."

Star Time

Tom Dowling has written a regular column for the *Washington Star-News* for the last two years. On July 12, his column about a company cocktail party was killed by Harry Backus, editor of the daily "Portfolio" feature section where the column appears. Following are excerpts from the spiked column:

The Star celebrated the first anniversary of its acquisition of the Daily News the other night with a giant cocktail party at the Shoreham Hotel. I don't know about the advertisers, but I got my invite on a Xeroxed piece of paper that said Star-News president 'Jack Kauffmann has asked a large number of advertisers and other friends of the Star to attend, and would like to have some of his editorial department stars on hand to dress up the crowd.'

*Well, as you can tell, this is a mighty flattering estimate of my status down at the paper. We stars of the Star are not without noblesse oblige, a certain *comme il faut*, and I resolved to do the best I could to singlehandedly dress up the affair. After all, what's a party these days without a star or two on hand. Perhaps Betty Beale [Star-News columnist] would interview me, even record some of my better quips for her devoted readership. At the very least there was bound to be a host of rapt advertisers queuing up to hear my candid views on their products.*

Well, the first thing I have to record is that the Star-News is not one of your ordinary faceless newspapers. I never saw so many editorial stars gathered under one roof in my life. There were star editors, and star reporters and star deskmen and star photographers. I'll tell you, as many stars as we've got I'm surprised the Post isn't on its knees begging for mercy . . .

What with one conversation and another I was

only able to meet three advertisers. None of them seemed particularly impressed and in at least one instance my views on the Watergate seemed less than well received. I was, however, unable to bring this advertiser to his senses since I found myself being muscled out of his presence by one of the stars in the management end of the Star. In this connection, I feel bound to observe that the pinches and kicks in the leg I received during my end of this brief colloquy might more justly have been directed at the advertiser, or, at least in fairness, have been shared on a 50-50 basis.

Still, such an affair is not without its serious purpose, although having sat through the speeches that followed the cocktail hour I remain somewhat mystified as to what that purpose might have been. There were moments when the speakers seemed to be saying that the Star-News was an irresistible juggernaut. . . . The advertising director Jack Schoo, led off with the perennial speaker's promise not to bore anyone with statistics. Just the same, it turns out the Star-News has gained a whopping 7½ million lines in advertising in the year following the merger with the News. That broke down into 3½ million new lines in both the retail and classified fields, not to mention 300,000 lines in national advertising. The advertisers gave Jack a rousing hand. Indeed, you could almost hear them draw their breath as he recounted the glories of the "new look Friday real estate section," not to mention the Friday Wheels auto classified section which was up 882,000 lines over last year. Automotive classifieds in the Post, Jack was compelled to admit, were down 25,000 lines in the same period. . . .

Then, it was the President's turn, introduced as "a man with the knack to reduce problems to the simple." Oops. Well, there were all those costly innovations, see. Cold-type? Very expensive. White space? Union costs? Automation? Getting out that old Stocks-Sports final fully two and half hour later than your average evening paper? Enough to bankrupt the House of Morgan. There was a kind of uneasy lull in the room. The bite was on. "What is it I want from you?" asked Jack Kauffmann [of the advertisers]. "Our goal is fifty per cent of your lineage. We need your help. We deserve it. You're a great group of people. We want to reach our goal. If not, well, how about 48 per cent. . . ." A piddling 48 per cent? What the hell happened to our 125,000 adult carriers, our 74 per cent growth in suburban areas, our amazing breakthroughs in Wheels and Real Estate? Hundreds of editorial stars and all we were aiming for was a paltry 48 per cent? It was positively degrading. . . .

In explaining why he killed the column, Backus said, "I didn't think it was very good, I didn't think it was amusing." He acknowledged that the subject was a factor in his decision, but insisted "that if it had been funny we would have run it because it was not damaging" to the paper. For his part, Dowling said that while he was not happy about the incident he thought it was "small beer" and was "astonished that [MORE] would be pursuing an investigation of a matter of such overwhelming triviality."

—B.H.

The Philadelphia Kid

The beginning was somewhat inauspicious. The Philadelphia Bulletin's announcement of its new sports columnist ran on page one under an immodest four-column head, and the new writer's qualifications ("an avid baseball fan since his boyhood days when he accompanied his grandfather to Washington Senators games") were not, given the hoopla, all one might have expected. He would write a Sunday column on the Phillies and other teams, but would not confine his efforts solely

to baseball. Then, in a paragraph that gladdened hearts at the rival Inquirer, Philadelphians were promised that young David Eisenhower would "Travel extensively with the Phillies, both at home and away."

Philadelphia sportswriters are a generally competent if acerbic group who work in a proud traditions. For years these trained piranhas have fed off the city's weak teams, and there was little reason to expect them to go easy on a neophyte starting out at the top. For it was, in truth, no small blow to the locals when they heard about the new reporter, whose most notable publication had been a controversial New York Times Op-Ed page article on student activists commissioned by a family friend, Herbert Mitgang. "First I heard he was coming to the paper to write a column," says Alan Richman, an excellent pro basketball writer. "I was incensed. Then I heard he was covering baseball. Finally, I heard it was just for the summer. I went from semi-madness to so-what."

"In the beginning maybe there was a little anxiety," says Sports Editor Herb Stutz. "I made a point of speaking to each staff member. I wanted to clear a couple of things up. First, he wasn't going to supplant anyone. He was merely becoming the fourth contributing columnist. The 18-member writing staff and five-man desk staff remain unchanged. Second, he wouldn't hurt their chances of covering the Phillies or making more money."

But how much was Eisenhower making? Rumors circulated that he was getting \$20,000 or \$30,000 for the summer, rumors that did not sit well at the non-union Bulletin, where salaries are generally lower than at the Inquirer and News, both Guild-organized. In fact, Eisenhower is receiving \$150 a column. Eisenhower reacts calmly to the criticism. "I've had a lot of experience in the game [a summer in the front office of the Washington Senators] and I know a lot of people. . . I feel qualified on that basis. I realize that I have commercial value to The Bulletin, but I hope people judge me on how well I do."

And what of his writing? Well, for one thing, it's his. "A lot of people wonder if he's rewritten," says Stutz. "I don't think it's proper, and we don't want him reading like Jim Barniak anyway. His one problem—and it's a common one among young writers—is that he's too long." The editors deleted about one page from Eisenhower's story on Bill Robinson, including the following:

• "Despite his impressive aforementioned credentials. . ."

• "Mad? Few thought him capable of anger watching him as the eager-to-please rookie, a disappointed sophomore and a defeated third-year man in 1969. But things had changed."

• And the final paragraph: "He certainly has [made it]. And in a sport known for driving its players to distraction, Robinson stands out as an example of what persistence and maturity can accomplish. No ticket to the bushes awaits his latest return to the active list in 12 days. The right field job awaits and best wishes of the Phillies management for 'some kind of guy'."

The first person given the authority to edit Eisenhower's copy was Richman, working as Sunday editor for the May 20 issue in which Eisenhower's first column ran. "Ninety-five per cent of all college graduates writing their first column wouldn't have done any worse," he says. "There were parts of the second column I actually liked." That first column, a defense of baseball's traditional aspects, was right up his father-in-law's alley: "The rhetoric of change tangles the modern American, and baseball, they [its executives] conclude, must march to its rhythm. Baseball's response: plastic fields, orange balls, pantyhose day, golf carts and designated hitters. . . Fans want a pleasant afternoon in a pleasant spot in the city to reminisce and, when given the chance,

a rooting part in exhorting their players on to the legendary heights of those who came before."

The second piece appeared to contradict the first. It came out on balance for the designated hitter, a radical innovation in the American League that allows a full-time batter to hit in place of all a team's pitchers. The next week Eisenhower reverted to the traditional, decrying franchise shifts and suggesting a 10-year residency requirement for future moves, a stipulation tougher than Phases One, Two, Three and Four put together. On the fourth week he described quite accurately the

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Arlie Schardt,
American Civil Liberties Union

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of Oregon.

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William A. Rusher,
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insignificance of baseball's free-agent draft.

The first four columns had several things in common: they were polemical, depended on secondary and official sources, and pretty well told the reader how to think on nearly every major issue pertaining to baseball. "There is proving still to be done," says Stutz. "You can't prove yourself in this short a period." But Eisenhower's weaknesses go beyond simple questions of style. In one piece he noted that during a visit to the baseball commissioner's office, the subject of the then-unannounced shift of the San Diego Padres to Washington, D.C., was handled with "hints, raised eyebrows and knowing smiles." A more experienced reporter would have made some phone calls and gotten himself a scoop. Similarly, inexperience caused him to believe Phillies manager Danny Ozark was kidding when he blasted the umpiring after a win. A beat says he wasn't.

Although many of his fellow staffers continue to consider him a promotional gimmick, the 25-year-old Eisenhower has established surprisingly cordial relationships with both his colleagues and the players he covers. "He was very affable," said outfielder Robinson. Eisenhower was even seen sitting and chatting with the *Inquirer's* Bruce Keidan, who had written a nasty



column about him. Anyone prepared to dislike him on the basis of his political statements was in for a surprise. People have found it easy to refrain from

twitting him about Watergate, the writers because he has been polite and deferential, the players because they are not particularly interested in the subject. The Phillies are one of the least cerebral teams in baseball. "They treat David as a minor celebrity," says one writer, "just as we do."

But the bitterness about the hiring lingers. Although the *Bulletin* and the tabloid *News* compete for afternoon circulation, the real competition in Philadelphia is between the *Bulletin* and the *Inquirer*, and the Sunday paper is a particularly contested battleground. Before Eisenhower's hiring, Tim Kelly, the *Inquirer's* 25-year-old sports editor, picked up Skip Myslenski, a crack reporter with five years of experience at the *Rochester (N.Y.) Times-Union* and *Sports Illustrated*, to write magazine-style pieces for the Sunday section. Though the *Bulletin* never intended Eisenhower to be its answer to Myslenski, he is there nonetheless, creating an invidious matchup: an enthusiastic tyro, spending 20 hours a week (his estimate) writing "think pieces" on old news vs. a pro, trained to dig exhaustively.

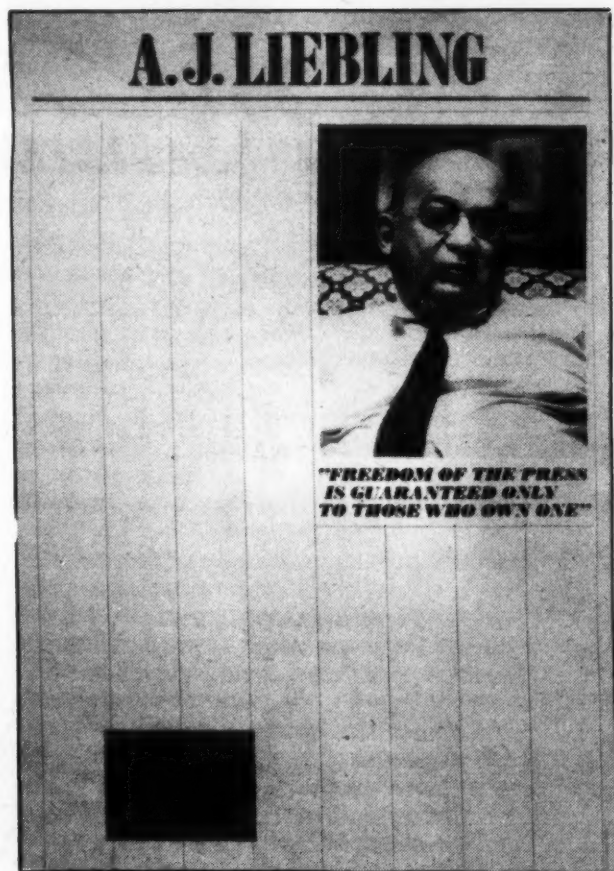
Bulletin staff members feel they deserve better. Fifteen years ago the sports department's youngest member was 27, the makeup *New York Times*-style and pyramid writing encouraged. Today's staff is younger, the makeup freer, and the writing more interpretive. Some staffers are philosophical about the new columnist. "I look upon David as a good promotion for the paper," says track and tennis writer Red Hamer. Most of his colleagues concede that Eisenhower's accepting the *Bulletin's* offer is not especially blameworthy; anyone who has worshipped ballplayers (his earliest heroes were Richard Nixon and Mickey Mantle) would find it hard to resist.

It is rather the *Bulletin's* hiring him—and the possibility that David's stay may outlast the summer—that raises backs. Things had been improving under Executive Editor George Packard, but suddenly, as one reporter explained, while the *Washington Post* "... is exposing Nixon, the *Philadelphia Bulletin* is hiring his son-in-law."

—JIM KAPLAN

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(LETTERS)

The Patriot

Michael L. Dorman's excellent article on the Wansley case—[MORE], June '73—does a disservice to your readers by failing to mention the role one publication—*The Southern Patriot* (mentioned only in passing)—played in keeping the Wansley case alive.

The Patriot—published by the Southern Conference Educational Fund—has written about and argued for Thomas Wansley since his first trial.

This little paper of modest circulation is more than an organ for its sponsor—while the national media of the above and underground variety, both left and straight, have abandoned any pretense of coverage of the continual Southern movement, the *Patriot* has gone quietly on, and really deserves an article by itself.

—Julian Bond
House of Representatives
Atlanta, Ga.

'I Killed It'

Without going into any of the details of David Zukerman's piece, "Dirty Linen" at CBS" in the

July 1973 issue of [MORE], I want to confirm as strongly as I can—and under oath if you wish—what I told the skeptical Mr. Zukerman: I killed the Blum piece all by myself without consultation with, or reference to, or knowledge of, William S. Paley or anybody else outside CBS News. I did it all myself—which is what I meant when I told Mr. Zukerman that, if there was one, I was the villain in the piece.

By implying to the contrary, Zukerman does an injustice to Mr. Paley, who has never intruded into the news operations by ordering any piece to be killed, or done, or altered. And Zukerman does me an injustice because I would never accept such an order—even if it were issued, which it never has been and which I am confident never will be.

Let me repeat—I did it all myself, and, if it was wrong, I was wrong. But I did it all by myself, on my own, because I thought it was a lousy piece. And I still do.

—Richard S. Salant
President
CBS News
New York, N.Y.

We welcome letters from our critics and will run them in full if they are short and to the point. All letters should be sent to [MORE]—P.O. Box 2971—Grand Central Station—New York, N.Y. 10017.

(CLASSIFIEDS)

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